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DEALINGS WITH THE DEAD

DEALINGS WITH THE DEAD

*NARRATIVES FROM "LA LÉGENDE DE LA
MORT EN BASSE BRETAGNE"*

Anatole Le Braz

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION

BY

Mrs A. E. WHITEHEAD

PREFACE BY ARTHUR LILLIE

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P R E F A C E

It has been observed that Borderland religion in various countries has always a strong local colouring. In Catholic experiences the visionary seems always to see the Virgin Mary ; in Protestant lands the Saviour is seen.

Says M. Renan :

“ In an island opposite Rotterdam, whose population is still wedded to a very austere form of Calvinism, the peasants believe that Jesus comes to the bed of death of the Elect to assure them of their justification. In point of fact many see Him ” (*Les Apotres*, p. 22).

The list might be enlarged *ad infinitum*. Early Buddhists were accustomed to see the founder of their creed, Sakya Muni ; whilst, by a quaint perversion of logic, the Nihilistic Buddhist began to see the coming Buddha, Maituya Buddha, an individual not yet born. “ Expectation usually creates the thing expected,” says M. Renan, who holds that all

visions, from the date of the women at the tomb of Christ to the spirit-rappers of modern Paris seances, are purely subjective.

But modern materialism, whilst accepting this conclusion, has pronounced this explanation of M. Renan insufficient. The ghost often knows more about the past than the ghost-seer ; more about the present, more about the future. In consequence, it has been found necessary to invent another ghost-seer, a much more intelligent ghost-seer, the "Subliminal Self."

M. Renan, who gloried in being himself a Breton, believed that the Breton ghost was very subjective indeed. The Breton is solemn, brave, pious, sad, credulous as a child. Round his coasts sweep some of the most dangerous seas in Europe, and at night in a tempest he hears the shrieks of the drowning (or rather drowned) sailors, who come sometimes to tap at his cottage door ; but he is too terror-stricken to open to them. He has in his province the terrible "Bay of the Dead," close to the Isle de Sein, whither, on the "Day of the Dead," all the ghosts of the year in Europe are

supposed to swarm. The Breton with grim humour calls the terrific rocks that bound his coast "the pebbles" (*les cailloux*), rocks that are the gravestones of many tall ships.

The Breton loves his priests, his magnificent churches, his *pardons*, his possessions, his healing springs. On a casual perusal of a collection of Breton ghost stories like these, the bulk of the departed seem to have but one object in the next world, namely, to obtain some neglected religious rite which keeps them still amongst the *Anaon*.

But when we read these stories a little more carefully, we begin to see that they are by no means a simple reflex of the minds of the Breton priests. The *Anaon* are a group of ghosts, called in some of these tales "souls in purgatory;" but the descriptions given of them bear much more analogy to the earth-bound spirits of the spiritualists. And the last person who dies in the year has a curious duty. He must drive about with a *charette* drawn by two horses in tandem. One of them is very fat, the other very scraggy. This functionary is the dreaded *Ankou*, the acting Angel of

Death. This seems to point to the Ancestor Worship of the old Kelts.

The work that Mrs Whitehead has so ably translated is a collection of stories gleaned at first hand by M. A. Le Braz. It is entitled *La Légende de la Mort en Basse Bretagne*. He went about getting matter from farm maids, from sailors, from small tradesmen, from any one who had any ghost stories to tell. There is an Introduction by L. Mariller.

Says the gentleman: "There is in Brittany no wall of separation between the real world and the land of marvels. The distinction between the natural and the supernatural does not exist in the mind of the Bretons, that is, not in the same sense that it does with us. Living and dead have a common title to be inhabitants of this world. And the two groups live in perpetual relation the one to the other. Folks fear the *Anaon* as they fear the tempest and the thunder; but to hear the ghosts moaning in the rushes that skirt the ditches near the high road is not more strange to them than to hear the love notes of the birds in the hedges. Brittany, from its mountains to its

seas, is full of wandering spirits that groan and weep. If everybody has not seen these spirits, all on certain solemn days (All Saints' Day or Christmas Eve), have heard them marching with dulled footsteps along the silent pathways."

The night of *Toussaint*, the evening before the celebrated *Journée des Morts*, the day of the Dead, has curious rites. By each church in old Brittany is a receptacle of bones, which are rendered plainly visible by grated windows. These receptacles are called *Charniers* or *Ossuaries*, and the dead are dug up after a certain time to be placed in them. "On the night of *Toussaint*," says M. Le Braz, "the dead come to visit the living. These, after vespers, perform the 'Procession of the Charnier,' and the priests and choristers sing before the Charnier the *Gwerz*."

As this *Gwerz* is very instructive, I append a rude translation of some of its stanzas.

THE GWERZ

Come to the *Charnier* and see your kin,

Behold—Ah me!—your fathers and your mothers!

See the sad state to which they now have come,

Brothers and darling sisters, friends and others.

Gnawed by the mouldering earth their bones are broken
Here are the rich, the noble, and the just—
Confounded in one rottenness they greet us,
Reduced to powder and reduced to dust.

The poor, the rich are equal in this temple ;
Here is the servant, here the man of fashion !
Faugh ! the foul atmosphere excites our loathing !
But let it also stir our large compassion.

Listen ! These bones, though in the silent charnel,
Can speak, if you can hear, with potent voice—
“ We too once ate and drank, and schemed and bargained,
We too, though gnawed by worms, could once rejoice.”

“ My face was pretty, I had many lovers ! ”
“ I was a rich man, where is now my wealth ! ”
“ I was a mighty noble ! ” “ I a soldier ! ”
But gone are rank and fortune, strength and health.

All we can carry to our Judge and King
Are gentle deeds done in this world of ours,
Perchance you question—“ Where are now your souls ? ”
Detained in purging fires by Heavenly Powers.

God's sacrifice can help your sires and sisters,
Oh, view this duty as a deed well done !
And when you pass amongst the churchyard gravestones
Breathe forth this prayer, “ God help the *Anaon* ! ”

After singing the *Gwerz* the company go
home, and the rites become more like the old
ancestor worship that we meet with in all

parts of the globe. The deeds of the departed are recited and commented on, and a feast is prepared for them.

“The housewife places a white cloth on the kitchen table, and on this puts cider, and hot pancakes, and curds and whey. After these preparations everybody goes to bed. An enormous log of wood blazes on the hearth. It is called the ‘log of the dead.’ About nine o’clock there is heard outside a doleful chant. This comes from the ‘Choristers of the Dead,’ who march about like our Christmas waits, but more solemn sounds often occur. The crisp leaves on the pathways crackle, being trod on by unearthly visitants.

“These pass the night which precedes their festival in warming themselves and banqueting in their old habitations. The folks in bed hear the stools moved about, and the next morning it is discovered that the plates are in different places. The dead go with the living to the mass in the parish church, which is celebrated in their honour.”

Here is cited a story by Marie Hostion, of Quimper.

“One year, when my father was going to the ‘Mass for the Dead,’ some one shouted to him from behind, apparently desirous of overtaking him,—

‘Hé Iouenn, wait for me!’

“He turned round and saw nobody. But he distinctly recognised the voice of his mother, who had died a year before.” (*Legende de la Mort*, p. 287.)

Another curious rite is the *Tantad*, which takes place on the eve of the Festival of St John. The *Tantad* consists of blazing logs of wood. When they have burned out, the company kneel round them and an *ancien* (old man) recites the *grâces*. The company then in single file walk round the embers three times. Then each picks up a stone and throws it amongst the embers. The cold ghosts, (ghosts are always cold), then rush in, in crowds and warm themselves. Each stone had a name given to it, the name of one of the *Anaon*. Each one of this body selects his proper stone as a seat. The stones are called *Anaon*.

Comparing Breton psychic experiences with

the experiences of modern spiritualists one point at once strikes us. The spirits that visit the spiritualists are looked upon as loving relations, as friends, as counsellors whose wisdom we can profit by.

The spirits that visit the Bretons on the other hand are feared as foes. This leads us to draw a distinction between "ghosts" and the spirits interviewed by modern mediums. Some definition is necessary. Here is a rough one.

Ghosts are spirits that come uninvited chiefly to folks who have not cultivated psychic studies. The spirits of the séances, on the other hand, are invited and expected. They are not *summoned*, that is a popular delusion. This at once throws light on the different aspects that these spirits would present. The psychic experiences of the Bretons, like those of most other folks before the Rochester Rappings, have been chiefly with ghosts. And in all lands there has been a superstition that a ghost comes usually for a solemn purpose, such as announcing a death. In consequence, although the Bretons feed and pet their ghosts they

evidently fear them very much, and would be very glad to have nothing to do with them. Everything is an *intersigne*, peas dancing in the pot, visions of oxen, the sound of phantom oars. Some psychic experience occurs and it is followed by a death. Hundreds of other psychic experiences occur. None of these are followed by a death, and they are all forgotten.

ARTHUR LILLIE.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THE interesting volume of considerable size, called *La Légende de la Mort en Basse Bretagne*, by Monsieur A. Le Braz, with a long and learned Introduction by Monsieur L. Mariller—from which these narratives have been selected—contains matter much more varied and considerable than its title would seem to suggest, dealing not only with Breton beliefs, usages and legends concerning departing and departed souls, but also with much of the national folk and fairy lore.

The following narratives are confined to those solely concerning Death and the Dead, recorded by Monsieur Le Braz, together with such portions of Monsieur Mariller's Introduction as bear upon that special subject.

It is thought that these traditions and tales will be found not only pathetic and attractive, but curious, and, in many respects,

confirmatory of other histories, experiences and speculations.

Fanciful and fantastic as undoubtedly are some of these narratives, oftentimes eerie, and now and again gruesome and even grim, they all possess a distinctive stamp and character,—respect for the Dead, realisation of their continued existence, and deep reverence for religion. The Breton race is mystic and melancholy, and as pious as it is imaginative.

The prayer used by the Breton fisher-folk when about to sail across the strait to the islands of the Bay, is a brief but exact expression of the Celtic spirit; its recognition of the helplessness of man in face of the fearful forces of Nature, but withal, its profound sense of the power and protection of God: “O! my God, help me to cross the *Raz* (the waves or surge), for my boat is so little and Thy sea is so great!”

Could a prayer so full of strength, simplicity and pathos, of poetry and intensity, have been the heart utterance of any of the races more resolute but less reverent, more determined but less devout?

The tenderness felt by Bretons for the dead, —above all, for the drowned, whether of their own or any other land or nation, —was not long since signally and most touchingly exhibited, when the steamship *Drummond Castle* foundered on their coast. Where else on earth would care so loving and religious have been shown towards the poor corpses washed on shore, or picked up by fishermen, and brought in their boats to land ?

The occult element, of which these histories are full, would probably hardly be considered “scientific” by the Psychological Research Society. Nevertheless, the manifestations of unseen power chronicled therein are, from many points of view, very far from being beneath its notice, and indeed are considerably akin to other statements which it has not disdained to investigate, though told in homely style and simple words. Perchance, could that Society obtain at first hand the evidence of the peasants, fishermen and other working people who, more or less recently, detailed their own experiences to Monsieur Le Braz, valuable facts might be

forthcoming from the observations of these simple folk, who live so near to Nature in her ordinary and in her extraordinary, in her practical and in her transcendental aspects, that the visible, and what is to most eyes the invisible, the seen and the unseen, or, at least, the dimly seen, become one and indivisible,—one world of God's, governed throughout by laws of His making, some few of which it has been given them to guess at, by long and patient noting of events.

These poor people would have more and stranger things to tell of matter controlled by spirit energy, of sounds and sights and signals, of voices and appearances, and of all sorts and kinds of communication between the living and the dead than has yet found place on the pages of the "*Proceedings*" of that Society. The evidence, however fresh, delightful and interesting, would undoubtedly need much winnowing and sifting; but who can say what *residuum* of curious, and even of *scientific* fact might not result?

Concerning the condition of the Dead we know so little with any degree of certainty,

that none can venture wisely either to dogmatise or to deny.

All that the Catholic Church, with her distinctness of definition, declares "*de fide*" on the subject, is this: "There is a Purgatory, and the souls therein detained, are helped by the prayers and suffrages of the faithful."

There is therefore on every side, and from all points of view, vast scope for reverent speculation; and for such research as comes from the careful comparison and examination of testimony.

All serious records of human contact and communication with those who have put off this mortality, and now "walk in the spirit, we know not where," have some degree of fascination and interest; especially when they are related with the absolute naturalness, homely realism and honesty of conviction that would seem to characterize the kindly, simple, if somewhat credulous Breton peasants and fisher folk who told these tales. Dwellers all beside "God's great sea," which has engulfed so many of their kin!

A. E. W.

SELECTIONS FROM THE INTRODUCTION

By L. MARILLER

IN Brittany no wall of separation exists between the world of marvel and the world of reality. The beliefs which have given birth to these narratives, in which the Souls of the Departed are the chief actors, are still active and actual beliefs, and the Bretons have no need to transport a supernatural event to a distant region and a far-off age, to accord it easy credence. They are still in the mental condition in which the explanation of a natural occurrence—sickness, death, or tempest,—which most easily arises, is one on the supernatural plane.

Distinction, indeed, between the natural and the supernatural does not exist amongst the Bretons, not at least in the same sense that it exists amongst us. For them the living and the dead are equally the inhabitants of

this world, and they live in perpetual intercourse with one another. "*L'Anaon*" (as they name the vast crowd and concourse of the Dead) is feared, as the storm and the tempest are feared, but no more surprise is felt that the thorn bushes and the rushes that border the roadsides should be shaken by the passing of disembodied spirits, than that the birds should warble blithely in those bushes.

All the Breton country from mountain to sea is filled with wandering souls who weep and make their moan, and though they may not be seen by all, yet may all on certain solemn festivals,—on All Saints' day, or in the Christmas night,—distinguish their faint footsteps along the silent paths.

For the Breton, the world of wonder is interwoven with the world visible, as the honeysuckle is intertwined about the hedge. He has a tender respect for the dead. For "*L'Anaon*," his feelings are deep and strong, half terror, half tender compassion, and he speaks with trembling of the souls of those who are no longer in this mortal state.

II

The narratives to be found in this book contain no special moral. They are not pious or edifying legends, they were not related * to inspire horror of sin or fear of God. There is therefore nothing artificial or stilted about them. These supernatural events were recounted with the same simplicity and good faith that would have characterized tales of adventures of sailors in distant seas.

Fear of the departed, combined with a sense of their perpetual presence, is the keynote of all these anecdotes. They are not testimonies to a dead past, but the expression of living beliefs, to which the Bretons, both of the coast and of the country villages, hold firmly at this moment. The actors in these stories behave just as would do the peasant, the fisherman, or the woman at the spinning wheel by whom they were related. The narrators are not surprised if a dead person comes

* All these stories were related to the author by Bretons, chiefly peasants.—TRANSLATOR.

to reclaim the piece of linen in which he should have been buried and which has been stolen, and were such a thing to happen they would no more hesitate than did the housewife in the legend, to follow the advice of the rector and carry back to the churchyard the shroud of which the corpse had been deprived.

As things are represented in these legends, so do they exist in reality in Brittany. The tales told round their hearths by Bretons are not only believed by them but are often their own actual experiences.

Breton life is still replete with usages which to us may appear strange, because, though once general, they have elsewhere died out. Almost all the circumstances of life are marked here by some symbolic ceremony invested now with a Christian garb, but undoubtedly stamped with modes of thought and feeling anterior to Christianity. It is perhaps hardly accurate to speak of them as symbols. Many persons still attribute an actual efficacy to these symbols. They are, in fact, of the nature of magic. They consist,—not of prayers and acts designed—so

to speak,—to attract the Divine attention, and to induce Almighty God favourably to regard this world, but very frequently of processes with intent to constrain His Will, or the will of the devil, or the will of the souls of the departed. And from this aspect the Breton rural population can hardly be declared more than half Christianized.

Certain actions are deprecated, not because they may draw down God's wrath, but because they are supposed to be in themselves directly dangerous. For example, it is whispered that no one should stand on Christmas night near crypt or vault to listen to the rustling of the bones, or near the stable to hear the converse of the cattle. To hearken would be certain death. Often, too, it is not thought to be through the protection of God that some unseen peril is escaped, but by some magical agency. There is nothing to fear from the dead, one will be assured, when going along lonely roads at night, for a person who carries upon him one of the tools wherewith he makes his living, be it needle, spade or shovel.

All such superstitions are rooted still in the hearts of the greater part of the peasants and sailors, and there are many, who would without much remorse spend the hours of Divine service in a tavern, and who would blaspheme the name of God without fearing to be struck down, who would nevertheless be wild with terror were they to discover that, on Sunday at Mass, someone had slipped, unperceived, a two-farthing piece, with a hole through it, into their pocket.

The true character of some of their ceremonies is totally unrealized by those who practise them. Partly on account of the seasons of the year when they are carried out, and partly because of their vague resemblance to the ceremonies of Catholic ritual, Bretons have come hardly to see any difference between these practices of very different origin from those, the observance of which, is enjoined by the Church.

Thus, for instance, twice a year they offer an actual "*Cultus*" to the dead, a real worship, of a kind which dates back not only beyond the Christian centuries, and to

the Hellenized paganism of Imperial days, but probably points to Druidic sources.

The Bretons nevertheless are in entire good faith in believing that the ceremonies accomplished by them twice a year—on the Feast of St John, on light nights round the crackling thorn, and on that of All Saints, within their storm-beaten hovels,—are truly Christian. They would think they had been remiss in their duties as good Catholics if they had failed, on St John's night, to recite Litanies round the blazing "*Tantad*," or if, on the night of All Souls, they had omitted to leave hot pancakes and cider on the kitchen table.

It does not appear, moreover, that the clergy are openly opposed to these traditional observances. They are even occasionally present at them, the priest blessing the bonfire and setting light to it. The same thing happens also in some other parts of France, especially in Languedoc.

It would seem probable that this arises not only from the desire of the parochial clergy not to hurt the feelings of the faith-

ful who have been attached for untold generations to these old customs instinct with the spirit of the Celtic race and its past history, and not solely from the practical wisdom which has led to the placing of a cross on the "*Menhir*" (the Druidic stone), or to the building of a church dedicated to a saint, close beside the venerable tree or the sacred spring formerly the objects of worship; but also that the priests themselves appear in some degree to share the feelings of their flocks, and to be willing to some extent to admit these curious cults into the Catholic ritual, side by side with the orthodox "*cultus*" of the Blessed Virgin and of the Saints. It is indeed just because this strange medley of customs and ceremonies has been, as it were, assimilated by Christianity that it has survived, almost entire, to this day.

All rites and usages, however, which, for theological or moral reasons, the clergy has resolved to destroy, it has succeeded in destroying, except in very rare and exceptional instances. And many against

which it has not as yet waged war, will not continue very much longer. The ideas of the Breton clergy on these questions are gradually being transformed; at the same time, schools are being multiplied; contact with the towns is growing easier; and each of these circumstances combines to cause the old customs gradually to fade away. If, in another fifty years, they are still extant, they will be no longer regarded as sacred rites, but as traditional observances merely.

III

Breton beliefs with respect to the Dead have frequently a strange similarity to the folk-lore of other lands and races, some still pagan, and some semi-Christian, as Servia and Transylvania.

In common with these countries, Bretons hold the opinion that souls do not go straight into the other world at the moment of death, and that even those who are destined to go there soon afterwards remain for some time in

the neighbourhood of the places where they dwelt in the bodies they animated ; that they assemble in a corner of the forest, or on the seashore, taking their flight finally in companies for their long journey to the distant dwelling-place of the dead, situated under the earth or beneath the waters. There is hardly an island in the South Pacific Ocean where similarly some solitary place is not pointed out as that wherein the dead assemble before quitting for evermore the abodes of the living.

In Brittany it is held that the souls of those who have been drowned in the Bay of Douar-nenez linger for the space of a week in the Grotto of Morgat before going into the other world.

There are some souls, say the Breton legends, who linger longer still in a state which is neither life nor death. One of these current at Bégard relates the story of a young woman who had drowned herself from jealousy, but who, owing to the protection of the Blessed Virgin, continued to live on a mysterious kind of existence for six years, fed by the bread given to the poor by her mother, and clothed

with the old garments she distributed to them. Her husband was not really a widower, and only became one at the end of those six years.

This idea of death as at first incomplete, and gradually accomplished, would seem a sort of echo of one which is very ancient, traces of which exist in many aboriginal races.

The very material notions concerning the soul, held by the Bretons in olden times, crop up still in many of their practices and in their funeral customs. The trivet must not, they declare, be left upon the fire, because the dead, who are always cold, and who creep up to the hearth in the night-time, might get burnt by sitting upon it. The dead are thought often to linger in the thorn hedges which surmount the banks by the roadside. It is said to be desirable to make some noise before ascending these slopes, so as to give them time to depart.

On St John's night (Midsummer night, June 24th), the souls come and sit on the flints which have been placed beneath the logs of the bonfire ("*tantad*"), when they have cooled.

On All Saints' night (eve of All Souls, November 1st), a repast is left for the dead on the table of every kitchen, composed of curds, hot pancakes and cider. When they come to partake of this repast they are said to be heard moving the seats about, and sometimes they alter the arrangement of the plates and dishes in the pantry. The singers who go about that night from house to house chanting the "Plaint of the Poor Souls in Pain," tell how they have often felt the cold breath of the Dead upon their neck and brow.

It is hardly necessary to remark that similar fancies are to be found amongst many uncivilized peoples, and that the custom of preparing food for the spirits of the departed is almost universal amongst such. The soul is by them usually regarded as being a body more subtle and more attenuated than the visible body, but equally composed of matter, albeit of a kind so fine as to be often invisible, and the belief that it can be injured or wounded is wide-spread.

There are, moreover, other resemblances between the Breton beliefs (collected in the

narratives of this book by M. Le Braz), and the ideas concerning the soul held amongst certain savage nations. It is supposed in Brittany that a soul is sometimes condemned to expiate its sins until an acorn picked up on the day of death shall have grown into an oak large enough to be of use to some human being.

This would not appear to be so much an expression of an arbitrarily fixed term of punishment, as of an idea that the life of the tree and that of the soul are in some sort of mysterious affinity. In New Zealand, in Borneo, on the Western coast of Africa, it is a general belief that the life of every human being depends upon some particular tree, and especially upon one planted with certain ceremonies on the day of his birth.*

IV

BRITTANY is pre-eminently the Land of the Departed. The Dead mingle with the living in close companionship; they are associated

* The same idea would seem to obtain even in some parts of rural England. See "The Woodlanders," by Thomas Hardy.—
TRANSLATOR.

with their daily and hourly existence. Their souls are not regarded as imprisoned in the tombs of the churchyard. They wander at night along the highways and the lonely lanes, they haunt the fields and the plains, as thick as the blades of grass in the meadow, and as the sand on the seashore. They return to the houses in which they dwelt in their mortal bodies, bringing tidings from the other side; the messengers of penance or of blessing, they glide about the silent homesteads at the midnight hour, and they may dimly be perceived from out screened bed-steads, crouching over the dying embers on the hearth. They enter into long voiceless conversations with the servants as they are tossing the pancakes with their wooden prongs. They frighten thieves away from the orchards. They come, by the permission of God and of the Blessed Virgin, as the protecting spirits of the household to watch over those they have left behind them exposed to the dangers and the snares of life. Mothers, who during their earth lives have been pitiful of those poor sad souls who go unprayed for and neglected, come, after their own

death, to caress their little wailing children in their sleep, tending them, rocking them, and wiping away their tears. In some cases, however, it is the memory of the possessions they have left behind, of their well-fenced farms, of their red cattle with shining hides, of their corn-fields waving like a sea of golden sunshine, that brings the dead out of their graves, and an old labourer will return to his plough and guide it with a firm hand through the fertile furrows, the yearning after old associations drawing him from out the silent realm of disembodied souls.

All the Dead, be it observed, are not regarded as kindly. Some, on the contrary, can be cruel to those who are still amongst the living, and it is not well to approach them too nearly. When night closes in, it is said to be wise to remain indoors. It is not good that Christians should walk the roads when the sun is gone down, lest they be exposed to dangerous encounters. The Dead rule the night. They dislike to be disturbed, and they know how to administer severe lessons to the indiscreet. The perils of the night can be escaped only by

supernatural protection, or by daring incredulity. Many travellers would not have returned home alive if their good angel had not accompanied them all through the weary way. There is, nevertheless, no fear for one who carries a child not yet baptized,* neither is there for such as recollect in time to invoke the name of God, and to say to the spirit: "If thou comest from God say what is thy desire; if thou comest from the devil go thy way, and let me go mine." †

There are also believed to be souls who haunt the houses where they have dwelt in the body, in order to torment their successors therein. The moment of the soul quitting the body is often terrible for those about the bed, and it is frequently no light task to watch beside the dead. The Evil One prowls around

* The belief being that the evil powers will not be permitted to prevent its baptism.—TRANSLATOR.

† The night-prowlers are not by any means always and only human souls, but often elves and sprites of various kinds, of whom "*L'Ankou*," the Death-foreteller, seems to be the most terrible. There are also the "*Kanorez-nos*"—the night-washers; the "*Ar-Hopper-Nos*"—the night crier; the "*Ar-Buguel-Nos*"—the child of the night; the "*Korandonet*"—dwarfs, who appear in triangular fields. According to popular belief these have never lived a human life, but have always been the haunting spirits of waste and solitary places.—TRANSLATOR.

the dying and the newly dead to seize the souls of the wicked, and many are the strange sounds that break the stillness of the night while the yellow tapers gleam.

But when a saint departs it is far otherwise. The air is filled with exquisite music, the sound of distant silver bells is heard, and a soft humming as of bees around the perfumed torches.

Wandering human spirits—those who haunt the houses and the plains, and hold converse with the living, are almost always suffering souls who have not yet completed the due expiation for their sins.

The lost are lost for ever. Once imprisoned in hell with the devils they do not return, and are heard of no more. Ghosts, however troublesome, are generally souls in pain. A soul may occasionally be permitted to leave the flames of hell for an instant to warn those who are praying for it to cease to do so, because each prayer increases its torments; but the case is exceptional.

The elect are not shut up in Paradise as the lost are in hell, but they rarely quit Heaven.

The Dead, still needing help are chiefly those who come as protecting spirits of the household to sojourn amongst those whom they love, poor souls who are waiting till the goodness of God shall open to them the Heavenly Gates.

Some few legends, however, are recounted of the appearance of souls from out the Paradise of God, who have walked, clad in dazzling radiance by the side of the hero of the history, guiding him safely athwart a thousand perils to the end of his journey and the attainment of its object; but of their life with God, and of the mysterious world in which they dwell, they reveal nothing. They fulfil their mission almost in silence, disappearing like moonbeams into the celestial regions whence they descended. It does not seem certain that the popular imagination clearly distinguishes such from angels. One of these souls is often given, in Breton legends, the part ordinarily attributed to the Angel Guardian.

V

However great the number of the souls who consort with the living in their low-built stone houses, or who abide in the churchyards and in desert plains, they remain invisible to ordinary eyes, and few are the ears who hear in the quiet evening their soft and silent tread.

Nevertheless, this world is never without tidings of that other mysterious world, the world of departed Souls. Vague and distant echoes arise from thence continually, far-off sounds and sighs and tokens. No one dies without warning vouchsafed to some member of the family.

Certain individuals possess a special gift of sight, and the pages of the future lie partly open before them. Such can, to some extent, penetrate the secrets of death. They are constantly receiving warnings and foreshadowings. They apprehend signs hidden from the comprehension of those who are absorbed in the cares of this life. Human voices, and the sounds and movements of the material world, drown for most people the whispering voices of the Dead.

According to Breton belief, were we less taken up with our business and our pleasure, we should know almost all that goes on beyond the grave.

It is certain that some persons have greater endowments of this kind than have others. If a death is to take place in the neighbourhood, these receive some intimation. An old man, living near Quimper, was always warned when one of his neighbours was about to die, by knocks given by his stick on the wall against which it hung.

It is not certain, moreover, that those who deny the possibility of tokens are absolutely and always without such warnings, only they shrink from fearsome things, and desire to hear nothing of the other life. Many Bretons have a sort of involuntary shrinking from the mysterious world by which they are on every side surrounded, and which is so strangely interwoven with the actual and material world. All that concerns death has for Bretons a wonderful attraction, but is to some amongst them a terror likewise.

It is said to be dangerous to hold too close

and frequent intercourse with the Souls who people the unseen world. It is even dangerous to know too much about the other life. Those who receive too frequent messages from the realm of the Departed are already marked by "*L'Ankou*" (the death-shadow). It is not unusual that one who has received strange revelations should die within a few weeks or months. It would seem as though the Souls, from their far-off dwelling-place, desired to draw the living to themselves, and that by coming amongst them they could enchant and enchain them, and carry them away captive to their silent land.

All these conceptions are of very ancient date. Belief in omens is linked with other and kindred ideas. Apparitions of departed Souls are believed both to foreshadow death and to cause it, and these tokens are not therefore considered as warnings from Heaven. Birds, animals, and, indeed, all creation, shudders at the approach of death. A bird flying round the house taps at the window, dogs howl, the magpie perches on the roof. No night passes without some signs

announcing the presence of death. Death prowls perpetually round the living. The Bretons feel it ever present, and perchance it is the consciousness that its hand is ever uplifted to strike that gives them their strange sadness,—a sadness broken by occasional outbursts of merriment,—but, nevertheless, a grave and solemn sadness, which characterizes all of their race who have not imbibed the new French ideas.

Ceremonies, moreover, continued to the present day contribute to increase this vivid sense of the presence of death. For some of these, the faithful are assembled in the churchyards and the vaults, for others they are led on cold November nights along rough roads, whose hedges rustle with the rapid flight of swarms of Souls; and the wailing chants intoned by them are full of tragic and unutterable melancholy, as is above all that plaint of purgatorial pain, their sad supplication for prayers for "*L'Anaon*" (departed multitudes), which they sing in procession from house to house.

A lingering memory of its most mournful music must ever haunt the hearts of all who,

in their screened wooden beds, lie listening to its strains, and must vibrate more strongly still in the souls of such as sing it in the chill, dark midnight of the All Saints' festival.

Amongst the Celtic race, the thought of death and of the after life is ever present. Everything combines to remind the Celt of death, and of the Hereafter; beliefs, ceremonies, legends, are all marked with the same tendency. This continual contact with death has deeply impressed the Breton mind. In no other land are those no longer in the body believed to be so continually mingling with those still in it.

The Dead may literally be said to retain their place in the family; the churchyard is but an extension of the hearth. Those who would communicate with their Dead visit it.

In great towns—in Paris, for instance—there is a sort of devotion to the Dead, but it is rather a devotion to their tombs than to the Dead themselves. There is no intimacy with them in it.

In Brittany it is as if the Departed had not quite gone away; indeed, that they are close

at hand, although their abode is changed from the home to the churchyard. This explains the strenuous resistance of all efforts to remove the cemeteries from the villages. To Bretons it seems a sort of sacrilege, and a breaking up of the family, that the old should be forcibly removed from the dwellings of their children.

M. Renan regards the constant contemplation of the other life as a characteristic of the whole Celtic race. It is, at any rate, certain that their familiarity with death has imparted a distinctive peculiarity to the mind of the Celts of Armorica. In their very love songs a sense of the fleetingness of all human happiness transpires. Love is a joy hardly tasted ere it has vanished. Love is nevertheless eternal, and lasts beyond life. The beloved one departed is no less loved than was that beloved one living. Love, alone eternal, and all else unreal, fleeting and fading as a dream ; —that is the deepest thought of the sad, poetic Breton soul, and perhaps in no other land has that thought found such yearning and mysterious expression.

BRETON NOTIONS AND SAYINGS CONCERNING DEATH AND THE DEAD

TOKENS are like shadows thrown forward in advance of what is about to be.

If we were less absorbed in what we ourselves are doing and in what is being done around us in this life, we should apprehend better what is going on in the other life.

People who deny "*tokens*" receive some such, as well as those who know they receive many. They deny them because they can neither perceive nor understand them, perchance also because they fear them, desiring to see and hear nothing concerning the life after death.

Certain persons possess more than others the gift of seeing.

One who prays for a person lately dead in a votive chapel, or who hears a mass for his intention, may see the defunct person kneeling

in the choir of the church. At first he will appear black, then he becomes gray, and at the end of the Mass he will appear entirely white and luminous.

When ships are wrecked in the Bay of Douarnenez, the sea washes the drowned sailors into the Cave of Antel near Morgat. Their souls remain there for one week before going into the other world. Woe to him who shall interrupt their expiation by entering the Cave during that week! He will die an evil death therein.

During stormy nights all round the coast the drowned may be heard calling to one another.

When a fisherman perishes at sea the gulls come crying and beating their wings against the casements of his house.

He who dies a violent death remains between life and death until the time of his natural life has expired.

The immense multitude of suffering souls is called in Breton "*L'Anaon*."

It is not good to sweep the house after sunset. There is danger of expelling the Souls of the Dead who at that hour often obtain permission to return to their former dwelling. Especially should care be taken if the wind drives back the dust, not to sweep it out a second time. Those who fail to regard these directions cannot sleep without being continually awakened by the Souls of the Departed. Moreover, those who sweep in the evening may banish the blessed Virgin who goes round to see into which houses she can permit these privileged Souls to enter.

Children who have died without baptism wander in the air under the form of birds. They make a little plaintive cry. They are sometimes mistaken for birds, but old people know better. Thus, floating in space, they await the end of the world. Then St John the Baptist will administer to them the Sacrament which is essential ; after which, they will take their flight to heaven. Saintly persons before entering heaven are allowed to pass through "*Limbo*" that they may see their

unbaptised infants, especially such as have prayed much for souls for whom no supplication ascends.

Certain souls are condemned to expiation until an acorn sown on the day of their death shall have grown to be an oak tree large enough to be of some use. Such was the case of Johan Caineck. But Johan had been a prudent man in his lifetime, and he still remained so after his death. The acorn sown on the day of his death was no sooner above ground, than he cut down the young sapling to make a peg. Owing to this stratagem, he had not long to suffer in the flames of Purgatory.

Other Souls are condemned to make mounds of peat sufficiently large to last three years for burning; others, to cut thornwood during a certain number of years to heat the fires of Purgatory.

Those who had a habit of shortening their prayers, in the morning to get to their work, and in the evening to get to their bed, with-

out taking time to say the final "*Amen*," wander in desolate places murmuring "*Pater Nosters*."

Having reached the last sentence they suddenly stop and can never succeed in getting hold of the word that completes the prayer. Thus, they may be heard despairingly repeating: "*Sed libera nos a malo*," "*sed libera nos a malo*"! They cannot be delivered until the day comes when one of the living shall have the courage and presence of mind to answer, "*Amen*."

If one walking along a road is saying his prayers, and if the word the Soul in pain is seeking is pronounced, the Soul is delivered.

Before reaping a corn field it is well to say:—"If any of the Dead are here, peace to their Souls."

It is good to shroud the Dead with hangings that have been on the walls during the procession of the Blessed Sacrament on the Feast of Corpus Christi.

As many as the blades of grass in a field, or as the drops of rain in a shower, are the Souls who suffer their Purgatory on earth.

During the day the world belongs to the living. When evening comes it belongs to the dead. Honest people should be asleep with closed doors at the ghostly hour.

It is well to leave a few embers of the fire aglow, in case the Dead should desire to seek warmth in their old homes.

There are three solemn festivals in the year when the Dead from different places meet together. The Feast of Christmas, St John's Night, and the Eve of All Souls.

On Christmas night they may be seen passing along the roads in procession, singing the Hymn of the Nativity with clear, sweet voices, sounding like the rustling of the poplar leaves, but at this season no leaves are on the trees. At their head walks the apparition of an old Priest, bent with age, and whose hair is white as snow. In his fleshless hands he carries a Pix. Behind the Priest comes a little boy

with a tiny bell. The crowd follows in double rows. Each of the Dead bears a lighted taper whose flame is not stirred by the wind. They wend their way to some deserted chapel where Mass is no longer said except by the Dead.

The Dead who require exorcism are nearly always the rich whose wealth has been ill-gotten ; guardians who have appropriated the money of their wards, and, indeed, all who have robbed others and have restitution to make. Their souls are condemned to wander until the wrong they have done is by some means repaired. These are spiteful and unkind. They roam about their former abodes, and avenge their own misery by bringing trouble on the living. They need to be exorcised to reduce them to silence and passivity.

Priests alone have the power of exorcism. Some Priests, however, are not fully able to use it. An understanding and resolute Priest is required, with confidence in his own powers. It is rare that one such is found in a whole neighbourhood.

If the ghost appears and the Priest can succeed in passing his stole round his neck he is instantly subdued.

Monseigneur Lyuer, who died Archbishop of Quimper in 1757 had, during his lifetime, as it would appear, committed several acts of injustice. For many long years he haunted his episcopal castle of Laumirou, driving through the park in his carriage and looking absorbed and sad. A young priest of the diocese had the courage to speak to him ; "Listen my lord," cried he, "Put your head out of the carriage window that I may say a word to you." The dead man thus addressed, leaned out of his coach. The priest was enabled to pass his stole round his neck. From that day forward Monseigneur Luyer returned no more.

To protect yourself from an apparition you have only to say : "If thou comest from God, say what it is thou dost desire ; if from the devil, go thy way, and let me go mine."

At Bénodet (in Lower Brittany) and in its neighbourhood, when a coffin is being taken

out of the church after the Requiem Mass, the bearers have a custom of knocking on the wall. This is done, some say, as a farewell from the Departed, to the Church; and by others, as a summons to St Peter to open the Gates of Paradise for the Soul.

If the flowers laid on the bed where a corpse is lying fade as soon as placed there, it is a sign that the soul is lost; if they fade gradually, that it is in Purgatory; and the longer they live, the shorter is the expiation.

As soon as death takes place, the Soul appears before the Judgment Seat of God to undergo the "Particular Judgment."

As soon as the Judgment is pronounced, it returns to *above* the body (not *into* it), and remains there during the funeral and until after the burial. The officiating Priest is often enabled to see it. M. Dollo constantly saw souls thus, and it was given to him to know where they had subsequently to suffer their expiation. M. Dollo, the Rector of St Michel-en-Grève, was a Priest

who knew more than almost anyone about all that related to "*L'Anaon*" (the countless Departed). He knew where the souls of all whom he had buried—except two—were suffering.

Besides such Priests as are enabled to see the separation of the soul from the body, there are other persons also who have received this gift, or to whom, for some particular reason, this mystery has been revealed.

NARRATIVES

I.—THE OARSMEN

ONE evening, after supper, we sat talking over the fire. It was in the depth of winter, and you know how, in that bitter season, the wind blows round our shores. I was but ten years old at that time, and now I am sixty-three; but there are some recollections that linger as long as life lasts. Listening to the moaning of the storm, we came naturally to talk of my eldest brother William, who was a sailor out at sea.

My mother observed that it was long since we had heard of him. His last letter was dated from Valparaiso, and in it he spoke of himself as in good health; but that was six months ago. Sailors are known to be chary of letters. "Anyhow," said my mother, "I wish I knew where he is now. I trust he is not at the mercy

of such a gale as we have here to-night." Thereupon we began our evening prayers, to which we added a special "*Pater*" for my brother William. Then we went to bed. I shared the bed of my sister Coupaia.

We were almost asleep when my mother's voice aroused us. "Children," she cried, "do you not hear?" "Hear what, mother?" "That noise out of doors." I was sleeping on the outside of the bed. I sat up and listened. "Yes," I said; "I hear the sound of four oars keeping time in the water." "Is that all?" she asked. "No, I also hear people talking." "Get out of bed, Marie Hyacinthe, and open a little bit of the window that we may try to find out what language they are speaking." I obeyed. I opened the window cautiously, lest the squall should blow its bars into my face.

The voices came from off the sea, from which our house (the house in which I still live), is only separated by the road. They were undoubtedly the voices of the four oarsmen; but, singularly enough, each of

them appeared to speak in a different language. Only one of the men in the mysterious boat spoke in Breton; but in the confusion of tongues and, above all, because of the wind, I could not distinguish what he said. "Well, Marie Hyacinthe?" said my mother. "It must be, I think, a boat belonging to some ship in distress off the coast, having sailors from various countries on board." "Light a candle, then, that the poor creatures may see their way to our house when they land."

My mother was a kind woman, who loved to aid others so far as her means permitted, especially sailors, for all the men of our family had been such from father to son.

I lighted the candle, and put on my petticoat and jacket. I shivered with cold, and, I must own, somewhat too with fear, as I stood waiting at the window one half-hour and then another. But no knock came to the door. Still, surely the men in the boat must have landed, for there was no longer any sound of oars or of voices. At last my mother bade me go

back to my bed. Coupaïa, my sister, had fallen asleep again. Notwithstanding the strange fear I had endured, I was not long in following her example.

Next morning, at daybreak, my mother went out to sift into the matter. But it was in vain that she made enquiries. She could obtain no information. No one had heard anything, and the coastguards between Buguélèz and Trézêl declared on oath that no vessel had been sighted and that no boat had skirted the shore.

My mother's face was pale when she returned. All through the day we waited with impatience for the coming of the night, which, nevertheless, we dreaded.

As we were sitting down to table for supper, my second brother, who had gone by sea to Perros on the previous day, appeared at the door. We had not expected him back until the next tide. I set his place, and the meal began.

All at once my brother exclaimed: "Some of you must have hung freshly-killed meat from the rafters!" "You must have been

taking too much to drink," answered my mother, who seemed troubled at this speech. "Good gracious! but do just look," cried my brother; "these drops on my hand are not salt water!" He laid his hand upon the table. On the back of it three red drops had unquestionably fallen, from whence, no one could imagine. My mother became white as death. "Surely," she murmured, "this bodes misfortune to one belonging to us."

We all went to bed, but a common thought kept us waken till fatigue overcame fear.

We were all listening for the sound of the oars of mysterious rowers. The wind had abated and the night was still, but nothing unusual was to be heard. It was not until the third night that the silence was broken.

My mother had just extinguished the candle when again the sound reached us of the splash of four oars, two and two alternately striking the water. I got up as before. This time I was determined to make sure, so I dressed and went out. The sea shone in the moonlight. I strained my eyes out over the clear stretch

of waters, I saw nothing but the rocks of St Gildas looking like spectres, and further off the weird, wild Seven Islands.* No boat was to be seen. Yet the plish-plash of oars sounded on monotonously and distinctly like the regular tick of a clock. But that was all. The rowers went on their way in silence, and no longer spoke their various jargons. My brother had joined me on the beach, but he saw no more than I. "Well?" questioned our old mother when we re-entered the house. My brother answered, "It must be a sailor's warning." Immediately my mother began reciting the "*De Profundis*" aloud from her bed. We thought of William, and we could not help sobbing as we said our prayers. I am not sure that we even wept quite as much a month later when my mother on her return from Tréguier, whither she had gone to receive her pension, announced to us that William was dead.

* "*Ar Gentiles*" the Seven Islands, of which "*Rouzig*" ("*La Roussote*"), is the principal. They indeed have the appearance of apparitions, capricious phantoms, which on clear days seem as if advancing almost to touch the coast, then suddenly disappearing into grey and unfathomable depths of fog, like the enchanted cities which the Breton imagination beholds emerging now and again from out the shifting tide.

The sub-commissioner had communicated the sad tidings to her. On the evening on which we had first heard the sound of the oars, my brother William, who was in the Indies, had been ordered to go on shore in the ship's boat in company with three other sailors to bring back some officers. He returned with a bad headache. The next day he had a bleeding of the nose, and on the day following, his corpse was consigned to the boat to be conveyed to the Catholic cemetery for burial.

In this world nothing need surprise us. All happens by the Will of God.

*(Related to M. le Braz by Marie Hyacinthe, Toulouzaux.
Port Blanc, August 1891.)*

II.—THE WEDDING RING.

MARIE CORNIC of Bréhat had married a captain who made long voyages. She loved him with all her heart. Unfortunately his calling obliged him to be much away from her. Marie Cornic passed her days and nights in thinking of her absent husband.

No sooner had he sailed than she shut herself up in her house with her mother for her sole companion. Her mother who lived with her would now and then lecture her upon her inordinate affection for her husband.

She would say to her : " It does not do to love too well, Marie, at least, so say the wise, too much is never good in any thing."

To this Marie would reply also by a proverb : " Naught on earth is so sweet as to love and to be loved again."

The young wife never went out except to the church every morning, where she attended all the Masses, beseeching God, the Blessed Virgin, and all the Saints of Brittany to watch over her husband and to bring him back safe and sound to Bréhat.

The garden of her house adjoined the churchyard. She had an entrance made in the wall that divided them, and was thus enabled to go and come from her home to the church without being obliged to go through the little town under the eyes of its gossips.

One night she awoke with a start. She thought she heard a bell.

" When two men a road 'bars' ar bed,
They cannot be long parted."

"Can it be the first Mass," she said to herself; "the Mass at daybreak?"

The room was visible to her in a shadowy light. It was winter, but she thought it must be the dawn. She arose and dressed herself hastily, and sped towards the church. On entering she was surprised to find the nave full of people, and more astonished still to see that a strange priest was officiating.

She turned towards someone who knelt near her: "Pardon me," she said, "if I disturb you, but what is the reason of this function? I was at High Mass last Sunday and I do not recollect to have heard any special festival announced for this week." But her neighbour was so deeply absorbed in her prayers that Marie Cornic could obtain no reply from her.

At this moment there was a sort of stir in the assembly. It was the beadle who was making his way through the crowd. In one hand he held his staff, in another a copper plate which he thrust before each person, reiterating in a doleful tone, "*For L'Anaon*,"* if you please, for L'Anaon." Heavy pence fell

* The suffering souls.

in showers into the copper plate. Marie Cornic gazed upon the advancing collector. "Strange," thought she, "I recognise no one here, not even the beadle, yet I did not know that anyone had been put into Pipi-Laur's place. Last Sunday he had the staff. Surely I am dreaming!"

Hardly had she made this reflection than the beadle came towards her. Quickly she slipped her hand into her pocket, but unluckily, in her haste she had forgotten to bring her purse.

The collector of the offertory shook his plate in desperation. "For *L'Anaon*, for the poor, dear Dead," he clamoured.

"Alas," murmured Marie Cornic, who felt ready to faint with shame, "I have not a penny with me!" The beadle answered in a hard voice: "It is not well to come to this Mass without bringing a mite for the souls of the departed."

The poor woman turned out her pockets to show him they were empty. "You see," she said, "that I have not a single coin!" "Nevertheless, you must give something. You

must!" "What *can* I give you?" she asked in a faint voice. "*You have your wedding ring*, put it into the plate."

She dared not say "No." She felt as if every eye was fixed upon her. She slipped her wedding ring from off her finger, but no sooner had she laid it in the plate than a strange sensation of misery seized upon her heart. She buried her face in her hands and wept silently. How long she remained thus she knew not.

It had, however, just struck six o'clock. The Rector of Bréhat, upon opening one of the doors of the church, was not a little surprised to see a woman kneeling by one of the pillars.

He soon recognised her, and, going up to her, touched her on the shoulder, "What are you doing here, Marie Cornic?" She started up from her chair. "Reverend sir, I have been hearing mass." "You could not possibly have heard it before it began!"

Then Marie Cornic glanced round the church. Of the large congregation that had lately filled it not one remained. She was overcome with amazement. The Rector spoke

kindly to her. "Tell me, Marie," he said, "what has taken place."

She told him all, just as it had occurred, without omitting a single detail. When her story was ended, the Rector said sadly, "Come with me, Marie; he who has deprived you of your wedding-ring cannot have carried it far away." So saying, he passed on up the steps to the altar, and raised the cloth. The wedding-ring lay on the altar-stone.

"Take it," he said, restoring it to the young wife, "and return home. You have loved much, and you will weep much."

A fortnight later Maria Cornic learned that she was a widow. The ship which her husband commanded had sunk off the English coast during the night on which she had attended that strange Mass, and at the very time when the Collector for the Dead had forced her to give up her wedding ring!

(Related to M. le Braz by Jeanne Marie Bénard, wife of a Custom House official at Bréhat.)

III.—THE CRADLE

MARIE GOURIOU lived in the village of *Min-Gueun* (La Pierre Blanche, or White Stone) near Paimpol. Her husband was at Islande, fishing.

That night Marie Gouriou had gone to rest after placing on the "*banc-tossel*" (bed-steps) the cradle in which her little child was sleeping.

She was half asleep when she thought she heard the child crying. She opened her eyes and looked about her.

"Jésus ma Doué!" (Jesus my God) she exclaimed. The room was filled with light, and a man leaning over the cradle was gently rocking the infant, singing to it a sailor's ditty in a low voice.

The man had drawn the hood of his tarpaulin coat over his face, so that his features could not be distinguished.

"Who are you?" cried Marie Gouriou in alarm.

The man raised his head. The wife recognised her husband.

"Have you returned so speedily?" It was only a month since his departure.

She observed that his garments were dripping, and that they exhaled a strong odour of the sea.

"Take care!" she exclaimed, "the child will get wet! Stay, I will light the fire."

She was already half out of her bed, and about to put on a petticoat. But the strange light which had filled the house faded suddenly. Marie groped for the matches, and having lighted one could see no one, and felt sure that her husband was no longer there.

She never saw him again.

The first fishing smacks which returned from Islande brought word that the ship to which her husband belonged had gone down with all hands and cargo on the night on which Gouriou had appeared to her bending over the cradle of his child.

(Related by Goanvic, Road-Mender, Paimpol.)

IV.—THE DECAPITATED HEAD

ONE night that Barba Louarn of Paimpol had been sitting up spinning to a very late hour, she fell asleep over her task from fatigue. She

was very nearly seventy years of age, poor old woman. Her distaff had escaped from her hands, and had fallen noisily upon the spinning-wheel. Barba awaked with a start. She was not a little surprised to find the room illumined by a white light. In the middle of the room was a round table upon which Barba was accustomed to lay the skeins of flax which she had spun. And lo! upon the heap of skeins she beheld a head, a head newly cut off, and from which blood was dripping.

This head she recognised as that of her son, a sailor on board a ship of war.

The eyes were wide open, and gazed upon her with unutterable anguish.

"*Matic! Matic!*" she cried, clasping her hands; "what in God's name has happened?"

No sooner had the old woman thus spoken than the head began to roll, and went nine times round the table. Then it appeared once more on the top of the heap of skeins. "Farewell, mother!" said a voice.

Barba Louarn found herself again in darkness. Her neighbours found her the following day on the floor in a dead faint.

Some time afterwards it was ascertained that on that same night, and at that same hour, her son, Yvon Louarn, the second officer on board the "*Redoubtable*," had had his head separated from his body by an accident, and as it was in heavy weather, the head had rolled about the deck for some time before it could be seized and retained.

(Related by Marie Jeanne Le Pay, Paimpol.)

V.—THE HAND UPON THE DOOR

It happened at Pont Labbé nearly seventy years ago. My grandmother was very ill, was indeed at the point of death. My mother was sitting up by her bedside together with her three sisters. Towards the middle of the night my mother said to her sisters, who were still young, and were overcome with fatigue: "Go and rest, my dears; half the night is over. I will watch alone until the morning."

The three girls went up to the room they shared. As the one who came last was closing the door she cried out, "Only look!"

Upon the wooden door a hand was out-stretched, the five fingers open—a thin, bony, wrinkled hand, with large prominent veins, a hand exactly like that of the old dying woman.

The girls knelt down, terror-stricken, to say their usual prayers by their bedside, but it was in vain that they buried their heads in their mattresses and endeavoured to attend to what they were saying. They could not help thinking of the hand, and could not restrain themselves from casting a glance sideways to see if it was still visible.

The hand remained stationary where it was.

Suddenly my mother came upstairs.

“Come,” she said; “I think the end is near.”

They went down, all four together, and were just in time to hear the last sigh of the old woman.

(Related by Madame Riolay, Quimper. June 1891.)

VI.—EIGHT OMENS OF A DEATH

EVERY time that one of my family has died, I have been warned by an omen; but the most remarkable omens that have ever come to me have been those which preceded the death of my husband. I was subjected to every variety of these during the seven months that his illness lasted.

One evening that I had been sitting up rather late, I had gone to sleep from exhaustion on the bench by the bedside, I was awaked, all in a moment, by a noise like that of a window being opened.

“Dear me!” I thought, “the wind is playing pranks.” Then there passed over my face a cold, damp breath, which might have come up out of a cellar. I remembered that I had left some linen drying on a hedge, and I said to myself: “Suppose the wind carries away my washing!”

I got up at once. To my extreme surprise, the window was fast shut. I went to the door and opened it. The night was fine and the stars were shining. The linen

hung upon the hedge where I had left it. The trees were motionless ; there was not a breath of wind.

I did not trouble much about this circumstance, though it did seem to me mysterious.

Some days later, I was spinning at the door with a neighbour. All on a sudden, I heard my husband, who was in bed near the hearth on the other side the house, calling me. I ran to him. "Do you want anything?" I asked. He made no answer, and then I saw that he was fast asleep, with his head turned towards the wall.

I returned to my neighbour's side. "Did you not hear Lucas call me just now?" I asked. "Yes, I did." "What can it mean? He is as sound asleep as a badger!"

A month or two went by. My husband was neither better nor worse. One night, I had just lain down by his side and was dozing off, when I heard, just over my head in the garret, the sound of a footstep, as of one walking stealthily. Then there was the sound of whispering amongst several persons. Then came a noise as of the moving

of planks, and, next, the regular knocking of a hammer driving in nails.

All this was very extraordinary, for the trap-door of the garret had not been lifted for more than a week, and I knew there could not be anything in the garret but part of a truss of hay, a few small faggots, and certainly not a single plank.

I called out loudly, "Who is making that noise up there, keeping Christians awake?"

I made the sign of the cross and I waited. But as soon as I had spoken, the noise ceased.

The next day, I went to the river to wash some sheets. To reach the Guindy stream from our house, there is no regular road, but only a narrow path, winding all the way amongst willow trees. I had hardly entered on this path when I heard a step behind me, and a low breathing sound, together with a rustling in the overhanging boughs of willow. And, strange to say, I recognised my husband's footstep, such as it was in the old days, when he was well and came home from his day's work on one of the neighbouring farms.

I turned round.

There was no one to be seen!!!

I spent the morning washing. On my way back I heard nothing, but the bundle of linen which I was carrying began weighing on my shoulders so heavily that I could have declared the linen had been changed into lead. I have since understood how that was. Amongst these sheets was the one in which my poor, dear man was buried three days later. For Lucas indeed died three days after that. God rest his soul! During those three days, omens were constantly occurring, with hardly any interruption.

One night there seemed a violent beating against the door, and then the murmur of a crowd of people coming into the house, countless feet ascending the stairs. The next night, there came the distant sound of bells, a pale coloured light burnt at the head of our bed, and the chanting of priests seemed borne across the fields, as if from the town.

I was unable to close my eyes.

But the last night was the most terrible

of all. My husband, who did not appear to be worse, had forbidden me to sit up. When I had made sure that he was tranquil, I tried to doze. But immediately the jolting of a cart fell upon my ear. It was all the more startling because there was no roadway near our house. When we first came to it, we had had to transport our furniture in wheel - barrows. Nevertheless, this conveyance seemed coming to our house. The creaking of the ill-oiled axle-tree became more and more distinct. Ere long I heard it strike the gable-end of the house. I rose up and knelt. In the wall against which the bedstead was placed, there was a skylight. Through this I looked, expecting to see the cart. But I saw nothing but the white moonlight and the dark outlines of the trees beside the field ditches. The axle-tree, however, continued to grate, and the cart to jolt. It went round the house once, twice, and then a third time. At the third circuit, a tremendous knock thundered on the door. My husband awoke with a start. "What is it?" he whispered. I did not

wish to distress him, so I answered, "I do not know." But I was shivering with fear.

It is impossible to die of fright, or I should never have survived that night!

My husband died the next day, a Saturday, exactly at ten o'clock.

(Communicated to M. Le Braz by a schoolmaster, to whom it was related by an old weaving woman of Pluz-unet (Côtes du Nord), 1891.)

VII.—THE DANCING PEAS

MADAME MADEC was an old grocer, living at Pont-Croix (Finistère). Having been ill for some time, she took a young girl of the neighbourhood to replace her in the shop.

One evening, a peasant came to buy some peas. The girl came to serve him. She had put the peas into one side of the scales and was about to weigh them, when, all at once, they began to jump about and to whirl like the dancers at a fair!

I assure you it was most amusing.

The girl thought the peasant was making

fun of her. But, no ; he stood at a distance from the counter with crossed arms in Breton fashion, and he was even more amazed than she was to see the peas dancing as they did for two or three minutes ; indeed, he had some hesitation in taking them, declaring that they must be bewitched.

When he had gone the girl hastened behind the shop to tell the story to Madame Madec. But Madame Madec was beyond hearing. She had just breathed her last.

(Related by Madame Riolay. Quimper, June 1891.)

VIII.—A DYING MAN ADMINISTERED BY A DEAD PRIEST

LOMM GREUN was a day labourer at a farm at Kerniz. At that time even rich people had no clocks, much less poor people. Lomm Greun was accustomed to look at the sky to know if it was time for him to go to his work. Directly he saw the dawn he got up and dressed and set out.

One night on awaking he thought it was daybreak, and sprang at once from his bed.

It was wintertime. Lomm started off, half asleep. As he came into the high road he met a Priest carrying the Host, accompanied by a serving boy ringing a bell.

The Priest, as he passed Lomm, said to him, "Follow me."

It is not possible to refuse to obey a Priest who bears the Body of our Lord. Lomm followed, bareheaded, repeating prayers for the person about to receive the Last Sacraments.

The Priest and the boy took a field-path.

"So," thought Lomm, "it seems the sick person is at Trégloz. Perhaps it is old Guilcher."

It was as he supposed in the parish of Trégloz, and it was old Guilcher. He lay stretched on his bed and about to die. Two men were apparently in attendance on him, but they were both fast asleep on their seats. They did not once open their eyes while the Priest administered the last Sacraments to the dying man. Lomm, who was kneeling on the threshold, could not help being disedified thereby.

The Priest, having ended his duties, made the sign of the Cross, and said, addressing old Guilcher: "My good man, I have long owed you the Sacraments. I have now given them to you. I have acquitted my debt."

Lomm Greun never understood the meaning of that speech.

The Priest then went out of the house.

"Go now to your work," he said to the labourer; "you will be early."

When Lomm reached Kerniz he found no one up but the maid-of-all-work.

"You are early," she said; "the family is not up yet; I am just lighting a fire for the soup."

"So much the better," answered Lomm; "at anyrate I shall not be accused of idleness."

And while the soup was being prepared he went to clean out the horses' manger. When he returned to the house he heard one of the young men at the table asking, "Have you heard the news? Old Guilcher has died without the Sacraments."

"That is not true," exclaimed Lomm. "If

old Guilcher be dead, he died as a Christian should. I myself attended the Priest who administered Extreme Unction to him, and I saw him receive the Viaticum." And Lomm related his adventure.

"Faith," replied the labourer who had spoken, "I met but just now one of the men who were sitting up with Guilcher. It was from him that I heard the story. There were two of them, and they were both so sleepy that they did not know at what hour the old man passed. It was Yves Ménèz that I met. He was on his way to the town to fetch the Silver Cross, and was very much afraid of the reception he might meet with from the Rector.

"Well, I had better make a clean breast of it," murmured Lomm Greun. "I shall be off to the Presbytery."

And to the Presbytery he went.

When he had related his story the Rector said to him: "Of one thing I can assure you, that the priest you followed does not belong to this world. The carelessness of the two watchers might have cost old Guilcher his soul. But God has infinite resources for salvation.

Lomm Greun returned to his work, but from that day forward he was always absorbed in thought and remarkably grave, not to say sad.

In the spring he died.

(*Related by Fantic Omnès. Bégard, 1888.*)

IX.—THE OX'S WARNING

It all happened a little before the "Great Revolution." I had it from my mother, who was sixteen years of age at that date, and who never told a lie in her life.

She was a cow-keeper at a farm at Briec. I cannot tell you the name of the farm, but it must have been near the Plain.*

I recollect that the master's name was Yves. He was an excellent man, and a clever man besides. He had studied at the College at Pont-Croix to become a Priest. But he had chosen to return to toil, not having, probably, a vocation. He had not, however, forgotten

* La Plaine, "*Ar-Bléuneu*," is the appellation given to a vast marshy ground between Briec and Pleybeu. It is singularly sad and solitary, covered with reeds and rushes growing out of the bog.

what he had been taught in his youth, and he was greatly respected by all the country side, for he could read all kinds of books ; it was even reported that he could converse in many languages. One Monday he said to his waggoner : “ I wish you to yoke the youngest pair of oxen, that I may take them to sell at the fair at Pleybeu.”

That was his way. When there was question of buying or selling he never decided till the last moment, and he was always successful. They used to say that he had a familiar spirit who whispered into his ear at the last moment what was best to do. Certain it is that he made capital bargains.

So the waggoner yoked the two young oxen, and saddled a horse for his master. After having appointed everyone his day's work at the farm, he set off.

His wife, who had come out to the door to see him start, said to my mother : “ As sure as I am here, Tina, my man will bring back a hundred crowns for those two young oxen.”

My mother went away to drive the cows, of which she had charge, into the fields. At

nightfall she had to bring them back. The path which she took crossed the high road. As she reached the crossing she met her master returning from the fair. She was somewhat surprised to see that he still had with him the pair of oxen which he had reckoned upon selling. You know that in Lower Brittany we do not shrink from speaking freely to our masters. "I expect," said my mother, "that the fair of Pleybeu has brought you in nothing."

"You are mistaken," answered her master in a strange tone; "it has brought me in more than I looked for."

"Fancy!" said my mother. At any rate he did not look very joyful; he was walking his horse, letting the bridle fall upon its neck; his arms were crossed, his head was bent, and there was a dreamy expression upon his face. The oxen walked along solemnly by his side, one on the right hand, the other on the left. They must, my mother supposed, have lost their yoke at the fair. They were both good and gentle creatures, although young. They had not yet been harnessed to the plough or to the farm carts because Yves was keeping them for

sale, but it was evident from their quiet way of going along and carrying their heads, that they were fit to do good work. At the present moment, they, like their master, seemed revolving sad thoughts in their minds. The little cortége went silently along, the cows leading the way. My mother was considering what her master could possibly have meant. In what way had the fair brought him more than he expected.

He held the middle of the road with the pair of oxen. My mother walked on the grass by its side.

Suddenly, Yves addressed her : " Tina," he said, " I will take the cows home. Do you take the short cut and run as fast as you can to the village. Go first to the carpenter's and order a coffin six feet long and two feet wide. Then go to the Presbytery and ask whichever priest is on duty to bring his bag with extreme unction,* and to follow you to our house as quickly as possible."

* Called in Breton, "*Ar sac'h da*," a black velvet bag in which a priest carries his ootta and stole and the holy oils to the sick needing extreme unction.

My mother looked with amazement at her master. The tears were rolling down his cheeks. "Go," he repeated, "lose no time."

My mother took off her sabots and carried them in her hand, and flew barefooted by the short cut breathlessly to the village.

In an hour she got back to the farm, accompanied by one of the curates.

On the threshold they found the wife of the farmer. "You are too late," she said to the curate, "my husband is dead."

My mother could not believe her ears.

The mistress made the priest come in. My mother followed them into the kitchen. A mattress had been laid upon the table and the master was stretched upon it dead. He still had on the clothes he had worn during the day. The curate sprinkled the corpse with Holy Water, and began to say the prayers for the departed. When he had gone, my mother was sent to bed, for they were about to straighten the body for the coffin.

The bed was not at the further end of the house. Only a thin partition divided the room from the kitchen. I need hardly say that my

mother had small desire to sleep. She pretended to go to bed, and to close the bed-shutters, but ere long she got up and listened at the partition.

There remained no one in the kitchen but the widow of Yves and two old women who were neighbours and who were accustomed to lay out the dead.

Out in the courtyard the farm labourers were talking, together with some others who had come to take turn in watching by the body. They were all wondering how it was that a man in such robust health could so suddenly have been smitten down.

My mother was asking herself the same question. Ere long she knew more, for she did not lose a word of the account which the widow was giving to the old women in the kitchen while arranging the body for burial.

"You know," said the farmer's wife, "that he never failed to sell when he wished to sell; so, when I saw him returning with the oxen, I reproached him; 'Yves,' I said to him, 'you have failed for once.' 'It is the first time and

it will be the last time,' he answered. 'God grant it!' I exclaimed. He looked at me strangely, and said, 'that is a wish you will speedily regret, for sorrow is coming upon you.' 'Yes,' he continued after a pause, 'it is the first time you have had occasion to blame me about a bargain, and it will be the last, for I shall never try to make another. To-morrow I shall be buried.'"

"I should have liked to treat him as a croaker, but I recollected that long ago he had said to me, and had since frequently repeated, 'When death is at hand I shall be forewarned.' Seeing him so cast down, I grew frightened. I felt certain that he had received a token.

"I asked him, tremblingly, 'What has happened to-day?'

"'Upon my sacred word,' he said, 'this is what took place: When we had reached the slope of the road near Châteaulin, the oxen which had hitherto gone quietly along, began to bellow loudly. Then one of them said to the other, in cattle language, 'I think we are being taken to Châteaulin.' 'Yes,' replied the other, 'but we shall be brought back to

La Plaine this evening.' I exhibited them in the market place. People came and looked at them, and said, 'That's a fine pair of oxen,' but no one enquired their price. It was the same all day. For a long time I kept down my annoyance, but when towards evening the ground began to grow empty, I could not help swearing and cursing under my breath. Really, by that time I believe I would have given the animals away, if only some one would have offered to take them. The black and grey ox began stamping with his hoof, and I gave him a kick. He looked at me sadly out of the corner of his eye, and said to me, 'Yves, two hours hence it will be dark, and four hours hence you will be dead. Let us hasten back to the farm; you, to prepare your soul, and we to be ready for our morrow's task, which will be to carry you to the churchyard.' That is what my poor man told me," said the widow. "Some men might have been angry with the ox, but Yves was a sensible man. So he followed his advice, and thanks to it, he did not die in the ditch by the roadside, like an animal, but in his own house, attended by a

priest, and receiving the last blessing of the Church, like a good Christian."

"*Doué do bardono ann anañun!*" "God absolve the Dead!" murmured the two old women.

My mother made the sign of the cross and returned to her bed.

The following day the coffin was drawn to the village churchyard by the two young oxen.

This happened, as I have told you, a little before the "Great Revolution." Since that time, it is said the cattle never speak, except at midnight on Christmas Eve.

(*Related by Naic, an old fruit-seller. Quimper, 1887.*)

X.—A FUNERAL SEEN BEFOREHAND

Marie Creac'headic, a young girl of fifteen or sixteen, was a servant at the farm of Kervézeun, near Brieç. Not far from Kervézeun a blind old man was drawing near to death, in a lonely cottage. He was the cousin of Marie's father (in Breton parlance

her uncle), and she went sometimes to see him.

One morning she was returning from Quimper, where she went daily to sell milk in a little hand-cart. It was winter time and hardly light. Marie came all at once upon a four-wheeled cart drawn by a horse, which a peasant she knew was leading. She had only time to get out of the way on to the grassy edge, with her little hand-cart. The large cart passed her, and she saw that it held a coffin. Behind it came the Cross-bearer, then a Priest, the Rector of Brieç, and afterwards the funeral followers. Marie was surprised to see that the chief mourners were the nearest relatives of her blind uncle.

"Ah!" she said to herself: "My uncle must be dead."

She returned to Kervézeun, feeling somewhat sad, and rather vexed that the death of the old man, of whom she was very fond, had not been communicated to her.

The mistress of the house, noticing that she had a strange look, said to her; "What has happened to you, Marie?" "This has

happened;—I chanced to come across the funeral of my uncle, and no one has taken the trouble to let me know of his death.”

The mistress of the house began to laugh.

“You were dreaming, child! You certainly were not wide awake when you saw what you say. If your uncle were dead it would have been known in the neighbourhood.”

“Well,” exclaimed Marie, “I will make sure.” And she ran as fast as she could all the way to the cottage.

She found the blind old man lying, as usual, in the shuttered bed near the hearth. But his face was palid and his breathing hardly perceptible. One of his daughters who was there, together with other relatives, begged Marie to join them in watching by him through the night, adding that it would probably be his last. She did not fail to do so.

Being rather fatigued with the day's work, she grew drowsy at the end of an hour or two. All at once, it seemed to her, something heavy struck against the door. She waked with a start, but noticed that the other watchers were sound asleep.

The door, however, was open.

Marie saw that a coffin was placed by invisible hands upon the "*banc-tossel*" (a sort of bench which adjoins the bed in Brittany)—She was much alarmed, and hid herself as much as possible. She endeavoured to cover her eyes. But if she could not see she could hear, and she heard unseen hands moving about the shavings and the hemp which, according to custom, were at the bottom of the coffin.

At that moment her uncle gave a deep sigh. When the dawn came he was found to be already cold.

Marie Creac'hcardic went back to Kervézeun, much upset, begging that she might be allowed to go to the funeral. But the mistress of the house represented to her that her customers in the town would expect their milk, and that after all, she was but a distant relation, and that she had amply fulfilled her duty to him by sitting up all the night.

The poor girl was obliged to yield. She took out her little cart and set out for Quimper. She met the funeral,—the real

one, this time, — at the same turn in the road where she had come upon the other.

Fearing to be reproached for not joining the mourners, she entered a field, the gate of which was open, and there she waited, looking through the hedge until the procession should have passed. She was about to leave her hiding place, when terror held her motionless, for along the road there came an old man with trembling steps and livid face. It was her blind uncle following his own funeral.

Poor Marie fainted with fright, and was found an hour later lying unconscious in the ditch, by some people who were crossing the field. They carried her back half dead to Kervézeun.

(Related by Marie Manchec, dressmaker, Quimper.)

XI.—THE SHADOW IN THE WATER

“I was very young then, but I recollect it all as if it was yesterday, and now I have passed sixty-eight. I was about twelve at

the time I am speaking of. I had been charitably taken as cow-keeper at the farm of Coat-Beuz in the parish of Kirfeunten, near Quimper.

That morning I had been sent to pasture the cattle in the meadows along the banks of the river Steir, where the grass had been mown the day before. Suddenly I shivered. Just before me in the water,—which thereabouts was still but clear,—I saw the outline of my master's face, and the upper part of his body. I was even able to notice his gloomy look. I thought he was going to scold me for being idle, and I dared not look away. My confusion lasted two or three minutes. At length, astonished at receiving neither scolding nor blow,—for he was one with a quick hand, I took courage and sprang up. Imagine my bewilderment when I found there was no one in the field but my cows and myself!

Unless he had sunk into the earth my master could not have disappeared so quickly. On the other hand, there could be no possible doubt that he had been there. It was most

certainly his reflection that I had just seen in the water of the river.

I meditated on this strange occurrence all the rest of the day.

At nightfall I returned with my cattle. The first person I encountered on opening the gate at Coat-Beuz was the master.

"He said nothing to me out there," I thought, "but he is going to be down upon me now."

Not at all, however. He welcomed me cheerily, on the contrary, accompanied me to the stable, and showed me kindly how to fasten up the cows, a task I had hitherto performed rather ill.

Seeing him in such a good temper after all, I began to chatter: "You must have been very hot this afternoon, Jean Derrieu, when you went through the meadows. You should have done like me, and bathed your feet in the water; that is so refreshing."

"What are you talking about? I have not been near the meadows. The fair of St Trémeur was held to-day, and I have just come back from it." Then I noticed that he had on his Sunday waistcoat.

"Really—I thought—I fancied," I stammered awkwardly. Fortunately the gong sounded for supper just then. At table I did not open my mouth, but I felt very much troubled I can assure you.

I slept at the lower end of the kitchen with the upper servant. We shared the same bed. When we were both between the sheets, I said to my bedfellow: "There is trouble hanging over this house," and I related my adventure to her. She treated it as folly, but I saw that deep down she was no less anxious than I was.

As the day was dawning, before cock-crow, I heard the upper servant called from the other end of the kitchen, where stood the bed of the master and mistress. I touched her elbow, and she got up. A few minutes afterwards she came and told me that Jean Derrieu had just died of a stroke.

(Related by Naïc, a fruit-seller. Quimper, 1888.)

XII.—THE NIGHT-WATCH

THE night-watch beside a corpse is called "*Ann-noz-veil*."

Certain persons know beforehand if there is about to be one in the neighbourhood.

My father-in-law was one. He had a stick made of red wood which he called his "night companion." It was a strong "*penn-baz*" (staff), which could be hung upon the wrist by means of a little leather strap. When my father-in-law returned from a walk he never failed to hang his stick upon a nail behind the wardrobe. Always two or three days before a Night-Watch was going to take place in the country-side, the stick of red wood began to sway to and fro, at first slowly, then faster and faster, between the wardrobe and the door, knocking alternately against each. When it struck the wardrobe it seemed to say "*Ding*," and when it struck the wall to say "*Dong*." It sounded like the pendulum of a clock, or still more like a passing bell. This "*Ding Dong*" would sometimes last for half-an-hour.

We grew pale with terror.

But my father-in-law would quietly say :
 "Don't let it disturb you ! It only means
 that a Night-Watch will soon take place."

(Related by René Alain. Quimper, 1887.)

XIII.—THE OPEN DOOR

It took place at Lescadou, in the old manor-house of that name, between Penvénan and Plangniel.

Watch was being kept over the master of the house, a man named Le Grand, who had died during the day. The watchers consisted of the servants, both men and women, and some of the neighbours who had offered their services, as is customary.

The last moments of Le Grand had been attended by strange circumstances. While he was dying the dog had rushed out of its kennel howling frightfully. When some one went out to quiet it the poor thing was found to be on fire, half roasted, and sending forth a hor-

rible odour. It died at the same moment as its master. This was considered a strange coincidence.

No sooner were the man and the dog dead than a terrible storm arose. A stack of straw in the yard was carried to a hundred yards' distance into the middle of a field, and an old yew tree was rent from its top to its roots.

The watchers conversed long and anxiously concerning these events.

It was well known that Le Grand had not lived an edifying life. He had the reputation of having been harsh to his own family, and pitiless towards the poor.

Suddenly the watchers became silent.

The door opened quite wide. They looked up, expecting to see some one enter; but nothing entered except the wind.

"Go and shut that door at once!" said a woman to one of the servants.

The man got up, shut it fast, and returned to his place by the fireside. But he had no sooner sat down again on his stool than the door was once more wide open.

"Stupid fellow!" cried one, "it is evident he has never been to Paris!"*

"I declare I shut it," said the man. And he went and shut it again, taking special care this time to give it a hard push, and to make sure that the lock had fallen into its place. "There, if it opens again you can't say it's my fault!" he grumbled, as he went back to the hearth.

"Either you are a blockhead, or the door is bewitched," said another servant. "Look, it is wider open than ever!"

"Go and shut it yourself then. As for me, I give it up!"

"Oh, I will shut it, if the devil himself be there!" The servant who spoke was a young man, strongly built, and with the arms of a prize-fighter. He pushed his fists against the boards of the door, making its hinges creak, and leant against it with his broad shoulders. "I'll lay anything," said he, "that the wind may blow as much as it pleases, but it won't open that door one inch!"

* The Bretons have a saying that you must go to Paris to learn to shut doors.

He had not finished speaking when the door knocked him on the back, and sent him spinning, and down he fell flat on the floor. He got up much bruised, and began cursing and swearing.

"A thousand curses!" he cried. "Who is daring to open that door?"

A mocking laugh was heard, and a voice said: "Did you not boast that you would shut it, even if the devil was there?"

The man was frightened, but he was determined to put a brave face upon it, so he said: "I ask again, who it is that ventures to open that door?"

"It is I!" replied the voice, in such a hard, cold, angry tone, that the man desisted, and with good reason, for it seemed to him that a fiery breath blew straight into his face.

His alarm was even the greater because there was no one to be seen.

He went, pale as death, to hide himself amongst the other watchers who also were all shaking and trembling with fright.

The house clock slowly struck the midnight hour. When the twelfth stroke had sounded

the tapers burning round the dead man's bed went out, as though of themselves.

No one of the watchers ventured to re-light them, so that the corpse remained in profound darkness.

The open door kept up a flapping sound, like that of linen drying in an open field.

From midnight to dawn the watchers did not exchange a single word. And not one prayer was said. They crept up close together, with no light but that of the embers of the hearth and of a smoky rushlight, trying to hide their eyes and stop their ears while they longingly waited for the dawn.

*(Related by Jeanne Marie Corre, Dressmaker,
Penvénau, 1888.)*

XIV.—A SOUL SEEN AS A WHITE MOUSE

THOUGH Ludo Garel was only a servant, he was not an ordinary person. He was constantly considering very many things that common people do not generally think about. His continual reflections had taught him much.

He acknowledged that he had come to know nearly as much as a man might.

"At the same time," he admitted, "there is a thing that puzzles me, and upon which I can see no light, and that is the separation of the soul from the body; when I am enlightened on that point I shall desire to know no more."

His master, one of the last scions of the noble house of Quinquiz, had great confidence in him, knowing him to be a reliable and a sensible man.

One day he sent for him to his study.

"My good Ludo," he said to him, "I do not feel at all comfortable to-day. I believe I have in me the germs of an illness from which I shall not recover. If only my affairs were in order. That wretched law-suit at Rennes worries me much. It has dragged on these two years. If I could know that it had been decided in my favour before I died, I should depart with a less heavy heart. I know that you are a dependable fellow, Ludo Garel, indeed you have frequently shown yourself such. I think there is no service you would not readily render me, so I will ask one more of

you, which will probably be the last. To-morrow morning at dawn, I want you to start for Rennes, and to call upon the judges and ask them speedily to decide for or against me. You have a wise tongue in your head, and I expect you will be able to say something which may favourably influence them. As for me, I am going to my bed. God grant that I may remain in this world until you return."

Ludo, before bidding his master farewell, did his best to raise his spirits.

"Think of nothing, M. le Comte, except of getting well. You are not yet ripe for death. Let me find you much better when I come back. I will see to everything else."

He spent the afternoon in preparing for his journey, and in considering what to say to the judges.

He went to his bed at twilight, so as to be the earlier awake. He slept ill. Many ideas, and many ways of putting things, made havoc in his head.

Suddenly he heard the cock crow.

"Oh! ho!" he cried, "it is morning and time to be afoot."

And Ludo Garel set out on his way.

It was in the depth of winter. He could hardly see his path. After an hour of walking, or more, he found himself beside a wall, which made a barrier in his way. He crept along its length and reached some stone stairs, which he ascended. The wall was the boundary of a churchyard.

"Hum!" thought Ludo, seeing himself surrounded with tombs and crosses, "happily the evil hour is long passed!"

He had not finished his sentence, when he saw a shadow rise as though from the ground, and come towards him by one of the side paths. When it was quite close to him, Ludo perceived that it had the form of a young man of interesting countenance, dressed in some soft, black material.

He said "Good morning" to the young man.

"Good morning," he replied; "you have started early."

"I do not know exactly what time it is, but I left home at cock-crow."

"Yes, when the white cock crew!* Where are you going?"

"I am on my way to Rennes."

"And so am I. We can, if you like, go part of the way together?"

"I shall be very pleased."

The appearance of the young man and his way of speaking inspired confidence. Ludo Garel, though a little uneasy at first, was delighted to have him for a companion, especially as he felt as if the day would never break! They talked as they went along. Gradually, Ludo became communicative. He imparted to his unknown companion all his circumstances, the mysterious illness of his master, the sad forebodings he had expressed to him the evening before, and the reason why he had undertaken this journey.

The Unknown listened, but said hardly anything.

Just then, a cock crew loudly at a neighbouring farm.

* The white cock and the grey cock are said to be undiscerning birds, who crow at wrong hours. Therefore no dependence is to be placed upon their crowing.

"At anyrate, now," exclaimed Ludo, "the day is about to break!"

"Not yet," answered the young man; "the cock that crew is the grey cock!"

And, indeed, the minutes went on, and it continued quite dark.

The young men pursued their way, but Ludo, having disburdened himself of all that was on his mind, and the other young man not appearing disposed to do the same, their conversation languished and at length ceased.

In the daytime one gets weary when one has no one to speak to, and at night one gets frightened.* Ludo Garel began to take stock of his companion from out the corner of his eye, and thought his manner singular. He longed with all his heart for light.

At length a third cock crew.

"Ah!" remarked Ludo, with a sigh of relief; "this time it's the right one!"

"Yes," answered the young man, "this time it is the red cock. The dawn is now about to break; but, you see, you antici-

* A woman is the narrator.

pated it somewhat. It was hardly midnight when you entered the churchyard where you found me."

"It is possible," murmured Ludo Garel, very humbly.

"That is not all I have to say to you. I want to tell you that it is useless for you to pursue your journey. Your master's lawsuit was decided yesterday, and the judges pronounced in his favour. Return to him, therefore, to announce the good news."

"In the name of God and of our Lady, I am indeed glad! M. le Comte will get well immediately!"

"Not so; he will die. In this case, Ludo Garel, you will be permitted to see the separation of soul and body. I know that you have long desired to see it."

"Did I say so?" exclaimed Ludo, who asked himself somewhat late, if he had not talked too freely as they went along together.

"You did not tell me, but He Who sent me to your assistance knows you better than you know yourself!"

"And I shall be allowed to see the separation of the soul and the body?"

"You will see it. Your master will shortly die, about ten or half-past ten o'clock. As it will be thought that you have gone to Rennes and back, you will be urged to take some rest. But you must refuse to go to bed. Remain by the side of the Count, and do not remove your eyes from his face. When he dies, you will see his soul go forth from his lips under the form of a white mouse. This mouse will quickly disappear into a hole. Do not concern yourself on that account. But you must on no account allow anyone else to go and fetch the funeral cross from the village church. You, yourself, must go. Having reached the porch, you must wait till the mouse comes to you there. Do not enter the church before it enters. Be satisfied to follow it. This is essential. If you abide exactly by my directions, you will see to-night that which you desire so much to know. And now, Ludo Garel, I bid you farewell!"

Thereupon the mysterious personage vanished in a thin mist, indistinguishable from

the vapours arising from the damp earth at sunrise.

Ludo Garel returned to Quinquiz.

"God be praised!" exclaimed the master, on seeing his servant enter; "You have done well to hasten, my faithful servant! I am as ill as I can be. If you had lingered one half hour you would have found only a corpse! How have things gone at Rennes?"

"You have gained your cause."

"I am grateful to you, my friend, thanks to you, I can die in peace!"

Ludo Garel did not try now to cheer his master with hopeful words. He knew that his fate was fixed. He placed himself sorrowfully at the head of the bed, so as not to lose sight, however, of the Count's face. The room was full of people, all in tears. The Countess touched Ludo's arm and whispered to him: "You must be worn out with fatigue. There are plenty of people to watch my poor husband. Go, you, to rest."

"My duty," said the servant, "is to remain by my master's bed till the last

H

moment." And he remained, spite of entreaties.

Ten o'clock struck. As the Unknown had predicted the Count began to die. An old woman said the Litany,—those present murmured the responses. Ludo Garel joined in with the others, but he could not follow the prayers. His thoughts were fixed upon that which was about to take place, the separation of the soul from the body.

The Count's head began to move from right to left on the pillow. He seemed to feel that death was approaching but that he knew not from whence.

All at once he grew rigid. Death had touched him.

He drew a long breath, and Ludo beheld his soul go forth from his lips in the form of a white mouse.

The man in the churchyard had spoken truly. The mouse just appeared and then disappeared.

The old woman who had been reciting the Litany, began the "*De Profundis*."

Ludo, in order to get away, pleaded fatigue

and emotion, and hastened by a short cut to the village. He had reached the church porch before the order to fetch the funeral cross had been given at Quinquiz. The white mouse got there about the same time that he did. He allowed it to enter the nave before him. It crept quietly and rapidly round the church, he following it walking quickly. Three times he made the circuit of the church on its traces. When the third turn was finished, it went out again through the porch. Ludo rushed after it, holding pressed against his heart the funeral cross which he had seized as he was passing. The little bells on the funeral cross shook and tingled, and the mouse scampered along. It, and the cross, and Ludo who bore that same, at length reached the Quinquiz meadows. The little white thing sprang over each gate it came to, as the master used to do in his life-time, and then ran along the sides of the four moats. Having gone round the meadows, it pursued its way towards the Manor House. On arriving at its entrance it went first to a separate building where the labourers' implements were

kept. It touched each of these with its paws.* To ploughs, mattocks, spades, etc., it seemed to be bidding adieu ! Thence it ran to the house.

Ludo saw it climb up to the corpse, and allow itself to be laid with it in the coffin.

The clergy came to fetch the body. The funeral Mass was sung. The coffin was lowered into the grave. But when the officiating priest had sprinkled it with Holy Water, and the nearest relatives had thrown the first handfuls of earth, Ludo beheld the white mouse noiselessly come out from it.

The Unknown Personage had expressly bidden him follow it wherever it went, over bramble, bush, or swamp.

He was therefore constrained to abandon the funeral, and to pursue his pilgrimage on the track of the mouse.

They went through woods, made their way through bogs, passed through villages, till at last they came to a wide plain, where stood

* The lord of the Manor of Quinquiz was evidently one of those peasant-gentlemen (or gentlemen-peasants), of whom there were once many in Brittany, who went into the fields, their swords by their sides, hanging them on an oak tree, while they guided the plough. Some, such, did not disdain to contest the prize for ploughing with their labourers.

the decayed trunk of a tree. It was old and so nearly stripped of its bark that it would not have been easy to say if it was a beech or a chestnut. It was quite hollow. It seemed wonderful that it was still standing. The little bark that remained to it was split from top to bottom. The mouse crept into one of its crevices, and immediately Ludo saw the lord of the Manor of Quinquiz appear in the hollow of the tree.

“Oh! my poor master!” he cried, clasping his hands, “what are you doing here?”

“Every man, my dear Ludo, has to undergo his expiation in the place assigned to him by God.”

“Can I not do anything for you?”

“Yes, you can.”

“In what way?”

“By fasting for my intention a year and a day. If you can do this, I shall be delivered for ever, and your beatitude will speedily follow mine.”

“I will do it,” answered Ludo Garel.

He kept his promise. And when his fast was finished, he died.

(Related by Marie Louise Bellec, Dressmaker, Port-Blanc.)

XV.—A SOUL SEEN AS AN INSECT

YVON PEUKER was a good man, living in the fear of God. His best friend was named Pezr Nicol. Pezr fell ill, and immediately sent for Yvon Peuker.

“I feel that I am about to die,” he said. “You are the man I have most loved and esteemed in the world; I should like to have you with me at the last.”

Peuker answered, “I will not leave you!” And he took his place by the bedside of his friend.

“Towards the middle of the night Pezr said to him, in an altered voice, “give me your hand,” and as soon as Peuker had put his hand in his, he died.

Peuker, who, with tears in his eyes, watched him die, then saw come out of his mouth a fly—a shadowy fly,—with gauzy wings, something like the ephemeral insects that hover over streams at eventide. The tiny thing went and dipped its feet in a basin of milk which was on the table, then it flew round the room, and suddenly disappeared.

“What can have become of it?” said Yvon Peuker to himself.

But ere long it re-appeared.

This time the insect settled on the corpse and there remained, allowing itself to be shut into the coffin with the dead man.

Peuker did not see it again till they reached the churchyard. It was only then that he understood that this insect must be the soul of Pezr Nicol, and he resolved to follow it wherever it might go.

The insect soon flew to a marsh not far from the farm on which Pezr Nicol dwelt during his life. There it perched upon a thorn-bush.

“Poor little fly! what do you here?” asked the good Peuker.

“You can see me, then?”

“I see you, certainly, since I am speaking to you. Tell me, are you not the soul of the departed Pezr Nicol, who was my best friend on earth?”

“Yes, Yvon; I am your dead friend; I am Pezr Nicol.”

“Come with me to my house. I will find

you a quiet corner, where we can sometimes hold converse as in the old days !”

“ I cannot do so, my dear Yvon. This is the place where God wills me to be for my expiation, and I have to remain here five hundred years. God must regard you with great favour, having permitted you to recognise my soul under this form !”

“ Oh ! I have not lost sight of you for a single instant since you were separated from your body. No, I am wrong, for a few minutes you disappeared from my sight, and I knew not what had become of you ! But, tell me, I entreat you, why did you first of all dip your feet into the jar of milk ?”

“ Was it not fitting that I should strive to make myself white and clean to appear before the Great Judge ?”

“ And afterwards, when you vanished, after flitting about the house, what had become of you ?”

“ When you saw me flitting here and there all round the house, I was bidding farewell to all that it contains. Then, when you lost sight of me, I went into the farmyard and into the

stables to say good-bye to the implements and the animals which had helped me in my labours. After that, I had to present myself before the Judgment Seat of God."

"You did all very speedily!"

"The flight of souls is swift."

"But why did you let yourself be shut up in the coffin with your body?"

"I was obliged to remain with it until God had pronounced my sentence."

"I could have wished that it had been permitted you to undergo a portion of your time of expiation near me so long as I remain alive. God knows, surely, that we loved each other with unusual affection, Pezr Nicol!"

"Yes, God knows that, Yvon Peuker, and you may be assured that He will speedily reunite us. Before long, your soul will join mine in this place!"

Three months later, Yvon Peuker, the wise and good man, was buried.

(Related by Catherine Carvenec, Port-Blanc.)

XVI.—THE SOUL SEEN AS A FLOWER

THE Soul appears sometimes also under the form of a flower—a large, white flower—growing more beautiful as it is approached, but receding if attempt be made to gather it.

XVII.—WATCHERS BESIDE A DEPARTED PRIEST

I SHALL always remember one date, and that is the 20th of February. I was watching beside the curate, a holy priest, who had died that morning. My fellow - watchers were Fauch Savéant, the carpenter, and Marie Cinthe Corfec, an old spinner.

The dead man was placed in an arm-chair, robed in his best vestments. His face was calm, almost smiling. We were saying the prayers for the dead, separately, every one by himself.

The silence and stillness began to make me feel sleepy. Fearing to fall actually asleep, I proposed to Fauch and to Marie Cinthe that

we should say the Litany all together, to help to keep us all awake.

The carpenter was very willing, but the old spinner, who was never of the same opinion as other people, preferred to sit apart near the fireplace, and to go on praying alone. The carpenter and I remained near the corpse.

I undertook to recite the Litany and he to answer.

All at once he made me a sign as though to bid me be silent, and hearken.

I listened attentively.

"Do you hear nothing?" he asked me.

I heard a little silvery sound, but very, very faint. It might have been the dim echo of sweet-sounding church bells, far away in the country.

It continued for a few seconds.

Then we both heard exquisite music, which seemed to come from out the walls, the floor, the very furniture, and to fill and flood the room.

Neither Savéant nor I had ever heard such sweet music.

Savéant sought right and left to discover whence it came. He could not find out.

When the music ceased, I was about to continue the interrupted Litany, when another sound became audible.

It was this time a strange, soothing, humming noise, as if a hive of bees had invaded the room, and were swaying about from side to side, not knowing where to settle.

"Surely," said Savéant, "there must be bees about!"

He took one of the tapers that were burning round the dead priest, lifted it high up, and went from one side to another, but in vain did we peer into all the corners, we did not see a single bee. The humming continued all the same, sometimes loud, sometimes faint, feeble, and hardly perceptible.

Fauch Savéant had sat down again, and we remained interchanging glances of enquiry.

We were not afraid, but we were troubled at the strangeness of what we had heard. We felt as if in a dream.

Suddenly Marie Cinthe's loud voice made us start. She said, "If you would like to come and warm yourselves, I will watch."

We asked her if she had heard anything, but she said she had not.

And from that time we also heard nothing.

(*Related by A. M. L'Horset, Penvenan, 1889.*)

XVIII.—THE WATCHING OF LÔN, THE MISCREANT

WHEN Lôn (called the Miscreant), died, his wife asked the neighbours to come and take part in the night-watch over his body.

"I am really afraid," she said, "to keep watch alone beside this miscreant. I am afraid that now he is dead he may serve me a worse turn than all the bad ones he has done me while alive!"

This was on a Saturday evening. And though it was late the wife of Lôn went into the village.

She thought to herself: "I am sure to find two or three scamps of the same sort as Lôn at the Inn, who will be willing to watch beside him. It will be quite enough to bring them, if I promise them cider and strong wine to their heart's content!" She was right in her

reckoning. In the Inn at her end of the village there were a number of toppers making a great noise and playing cards.

The wife of Lôn crossed the threshold and said : "Are there here four strong men able to do me a service ?"

"Yes, within reason," answered one of the men.

"It is to watch beside my husband who has just died. I can promise cider and strong wine in plenty."

"Well, boys," said the man who had answered, addressing his companions, "as you know, the Innkeeper has threatened to turn us out at nine o'clock, let us go with this woman, we can go on with our game at her house, and the drink will cost us nothing."

"Let us go," cried the others.

The wife of Lôn returned home escorted by four half tipsy fellows, brawling loudly all the way.

"Here we are," said she, pushing open the door ; "I must beg of you to be a little quieter out of respect for death."

The dead man was stretched upon the

kitchen table, covered with a tablecloth, which was the best piece of linen in the house, the face alone was uncovered.

"Ah! after all it's Lôn, called 'the Miscreant!'"

"Yes," replied the widow, "he died this afternoon."

She went to a cupboard and took out wine and glasses, which she laid on the bench.

"Drink as much as you will," she said, "I am going to bed."

"Yes, yes. You can leave Lôn in our charge, we won't let him escape!"

The woman having gone away, the men established themselves round a little table, placed near the corpse, upon which a candle was burning, and a piece of box-wood (blessed on Palm Sunday) lay beside a dish of Holy Water.

I have not told you the men's names. They were Vraz, Bitouz, and the two brothers Troadek from Kerelgiun. All were careless, determined men, not likely to be daunted by the presence of a corpse.

Vraz took a pack of cards out of his pocket, which he always kept there. "Cut," said he to William Troadek. Thus the game began.

For about an hour they played, drank, cursed, and swore.

When they came, the men were but half drunk, they were so completely now, except the youngest of the brothers Troadek. He had a little more right feeling than the rest. "Come, come, boys," he said, "after all we are not doing as we ought. Have you no fear that we may have cause to repent this behaviour by a dead man's side? We have not even said a "*De Profundis*" for the repose of his soul!"

"Oh! oh!" laughed Bitouz, "for the soul of Lôn, the Miscreant! If he had a soul, it would rather play and drink with us than hear us say "*De Profundis*!"

"By the Powers, yes!" cried Vraz, "Lôn was a regular vagabond. I am sure that dead though he be, if we proposed a game to him he would accept."

"Don't say such things, Vraz."

"We shall see!"

Suiting the action to the word he shuffled the cards, and as it was his turn to deal, instead of four players, he counted five.

"Old Lôn," he cried, "there's a set for you!"

Then a terrible thing happened.

The dead man, whose hands were joined across his chest, gradually slipped his left arm to the table on which they were playing, put his hand upon the cards which fell to his share, lifted them above his face, as though to look at them, then put one down, whilst a fearful voice thundered out, "Spades are trumps! Spades are trumps! Spades are trumps!"

The four young dare-devils, petrified with fear, rushed to the door. And Vraz, in spite of his bragging, was not the last to make off. They all fled from the house, out into the dark night, not knowing or caring whither, and they wandered about the fields till dawn, like wild creatures. When at daybreak they got each to his home, they were all as pale as death. Vraz died during the week. The others escaped after having suffered for nearly

a year from a strange fever, which was only cured by drinking water from the well of St Gouéry.*

(*Related by Jeanne Marie Corre, Penvénau, 1886.*)

XIX.—THE WOMAN PURSUED BY TWO DOGS

THIS happened when the linen from Lower Brittany was considered superior to any from elsewhere. There was not at that time, either at Penvénan or in the neighbourhood, any woman who spun such fine linen as Fant-Ar-Merrer, from Crec-h'-Avel. Every Wednesday, she went to Tréguier to sell what she had spun.

One Tuesday evening she said to herself, "I must start early to-morrow morning." And she went to bed with this resolution. In the middle of the night she awoke, and was surprised to find that it was almost light. She got up in haste, dressed, threw her packet over her shoulders, and set out on her way.

Having reached the rise in the road which leads to La Croix de Brabant (where roads

* The water from the well of St Gouéry is believed to be efficacious in cases of fever and obstinate headache.

meet), she came upon a young man. They exchanged a "Good morning," and walked on together as far as the Cross. Then the young man touched Fant-Ar-Merrer on the arm and said, "Let us stop here." And he pushed her to the roadside near the hedge, and placed himself before her as if to protect her.

Hardly had they thus ranged themselves, when Fant heard fearful sounds advancing towards them. Never had she heard such a tumult. There might have been a hundred heavy carts going at a gallop, so great was the noise.

And it came nearer and nearer !

Fant trembled all over. Nevertheless, she was desirous of knowing what it could be.

A woman ran breathlessly along the road. She went so quickly that the streamers of her cap might be heard flapping as if they had been the wings of a bird. Her bare feet hardly touched the ground, yet they left drops of blood behind. Her unbound hair hung down behind her. She tossed her arms in wild despair, and moaned piteously. It was such a cry of anguish that Fant-Ar-Merrer

felt cold to her finger tips. The woman was pursued by two dogs who seemed to be striving, each to get hold of her.

One of these dogs was white, the other was black.

It was they who were making all the disturbance.

At each leap they took the earth seemed to echo.

The woman was making for the Cross.

Fant-Ar-Merrer saw her dart towards the steps of the Calvary. At that very moment the black dog had succeeded in seizing her by the edge of her skirt. But she, springing forward, caught hold of the stem of the Cross and clung to it with all her strength.

The black dog instantly disappeared, barking hideously.

The white dog remained near the poor woman, and began to lick her wounds.

Then the young man said to Fant-Ar-Merrer, "You can now go on your way. It is but just midnight. Never again risk seeing what you have seen to-night, for I cannot be always at hand to protect you. At certain hours it is

not well to be on the roads. When you get to Kervénon, enter the house. You will find a man about to die. Spend the night in saying the prayers for the dying by his bedside, and do not leave that house till day-break. As for me, I am your good angel."

(Related by Marie Louise Bellec, Port-Blanc.)

XX.—THE STORY OF A GRAVE-DIGGER

THE grave-digger of Penvénon at that time was old Poézevara. He was generally called Poaz-Coz. Old as he was, and although he had "dug six times round the churchyard," which is the same as saying that he had dug in the same place six graves, he was a man who knew, almost to a day, how long each corpse had been buried, and how much it had become decomposed. In short, it would have been difficult to find a grave-digger who knew so much about his business. He seemed to see clearly into the graves he had dug and filled in. The blest earth of the churchyard was to his eyes as transparent as water. One morning the Rector called him.

"Poaz-Coz, Mab-Ar-Guenn has just died. I think you might dig his grave where that tall Roperz was buried five years ago ; don't you agree with me ? "

"No, Reverend Sir, no ! Corpses are preserved for a long time in that corner. I know Roperz. It is doubtful if by this time the worms have attacked him."

"Well, you must do your best. Mab-Ar-Guenn's family greatly desire that he should be buried in that spot. Roperz has been there these five years. It is time he should make room for another. It is but just ! "

Poaz-Coz went away with his head in the air. He was not the master, he had to obey, but he was not satisfied.

He put his pick-axe into the ground. Very soon a third of it was opened.

"One more blow," said Poaz to himself, "and I shall have reached the coffin."

And he struck the blow with such force that not only did he reach the coffin, but he went through it. Infected effluvia rose up into his face. He reproached himself for having given too heavy blows.

"God is nevertheless my witness," he murmured, "that I had no intention of touching that poor Roperz ! On the contrary I want to arrange so that he shall not be distressed by the vicinity of Mab-Ar-Guenn."

The good grave-digger spent two hours in making sufficient space at the bottom of the grave that two coffins should be placed therein, that of Roperz having a corner to itself.

This done, he felt more at ease in his mind, although he was even then not quite comfortable. The idea of having treated one of his dead with disrespect. He had no appetite for his supper that evening, and went early to bed.

He had just fallen into a doze when the noise of the door turning on its hinges awaked him.

"Who is there ?" asked he, sitting up.

"You were not expecting me then ?" answered a voice that he recognised at once, notwithstanding its sepulchral tone.

"To say the truth, François Roperz, I did think it possible you might come !"

"Yes, I have come to show you what you have inflicted upon me !"

The moon was at its height, and its clear light illumined the grave-digger's house.

"See!" continued the ghost, "a living man should not be treated thus, still less a dead man!"

He unbuttoned his long shroud. Poaz-Coz shut his eyes. The spectacle was enough to make one die of horror. The chest of Roperz was one great hideous wound.

"In truth I ask your forgiveness, François Roperz," said poor Poaz, in a tone of entreaty. "Do, pray, forgive me! I am not as bad as you think. I did not desire to touch your grave. I knew that your time had not expired. But I am only a servant. I must obey the Rector's orders, or I should lose my livelihood, for I am too old to learn a new trade. And indeed it is the first time that such a thing has happened, all who lie in the churchyard can declare it!"

"And therefore, Poaz-Coz, I bear you no ill-will, and the less because you have done your best to repair the harm you involuntarily did to me."

The grave-digger uncovered his eyes. The ghost had buttoned his shroud.

"I see," exclaimed Poaz, "that you remain as good-natured in the other world as you were in this!"

"Alas!" cried Roperz, "that doesn't count much where I am!"

"You are not quite happy, then?"

"No, I still have need that a Mass be said. I thought that perhaps after what has occurred, you would not refuse to have one said, and to pay for it yourself!"

"No, I certainly will not refuse, you shall have the Mass you need, François Roperz!"

"Hear me to the end. This Mass must be said by the Rector of Penvénon, by him, himself. Do you hear?"

"I hear."

"I thank you, Poaz-Coz," the ghost said. And those were his last words. The grave-digger beheld him go out of his house, cross the village green, and clear the churchyard fence.

The following day, which happened to be Sunday, amongst the notices before the sermon

at High Mass, the Rector announced that on the following Tuesday Mass would be said at the request of Poaz, the grave-digger, for the repose of the soul of François Roperz, of Kervinion.

Tuesday came, and the Mass was said by the Rector himself. Poaz-Coz knelt in the front row, I, who tell you the story, was there also ; my chair was next to his.

When, after the Mass was over, the Rector was on his way to the Sacristy, Poaz touched my elbow.

"Look," said he, in a trembling tone.

"At what?"

"Do you not see someone following the Rector into the Sacristy?"

"Yes, I do."

"Do you not recognise him?"

And before I could reply, Poaz-Coz whispered into my ear, "It is François Roperz, don't you see, it is François Roperz!"

It was true. I recognised him directly Poaz spoke. The step, the manner, the dress, were all those of François Roperz. I felt quite bewildered.

"You will see," said Poaz-Coz, "that something will come of this!"

And so it was.

As the Rector, after having taken off his sacerdotal vestments, was crossing the churchyard as a short cut to the Presbytery, he was suddenly seen to sway, and he fell down dead not far from the newly filled grave where, beside the coffin of François Roperz, that of Mab-Ar-Guenn had been laid. *

(*Related by Baptiste Geffroy, Pennéon, 1886.*)

XXI.—SUFFERING SOULS ON PILGRIMAGE

THERE are two pilgrimages which every one ought to have made, once, at least, in his life. The first is to Loc-Ronan, round St Ronan's holy mountain. This pilgrimage is not properly fulfilled if the head is turned even once during the pious pilgrimage. It is essential to follow exactly the circuit St Ronan made, without omission, and without being daunted by ditch, by under-wood, or by bog.

This pilgrimage is called, "La Troménie."

* Poëzevara (called Poaz-Coz) the grave-digger, died in 1889. Another version of the story relates that the Rector had a fit on the day he said the Mass, but did not die on the actual day.

Persons accomplishing it alone, even when they have seen no one, have often heard a rustling in the hedges and the sound of footsteps. Souls, who during their lives had failed to make this pilgrimage, were making it after their death.

Sometimes, when the weather is bad, the great Troménie procession cannot take place. When that is so, mysterious bells are heard in the air, and a long line of shadows passes. These are the souls of the dead, who are resolved to accomplish the holy observance. Saint Ronan leads them, ringing his iron bell.*

The second essential pilgrimage is that of Saint Servais.

If this pilgrimage is not made in life, it has to be accomplished after death. When that is the case, the coffin has to be carried on the shoulders, and the daily progress cannot exceed the length of the coffin. In the church of St Servais there is a wall which has a deep cavity. Through that, the dead return to their

* A vision of this kind is recorded in the register of the Parish of Locronan, in which the undersigned declare that they saw the procession pass, with lights, banners and crosses, and heard bells ringing of themselves.

graves when their devotions are done. If you put your head through the hole, you can hear the grating of the coffins on the pavement, and the noise they make in rolling back into the vault.

When during life one has made a vow to visit any sanctuary, one is bound to do so after one's death, if it has not been performed during one's life. But a dead person cannot go on a pilgrimage *alone*. He must be accompanied by one of the living.

He goes therefore at the midnight hour, the hour of the dead, to one or other of his family, and speaks to him in dreams.

(Told to M. Le Braz by a fruit-seller at Quimper, known as Naïc.)

XXII.—THE "GWERZ" OR BALLAD OF DOM JEAN DERRIEN *

DOM JEAN DERRIEN is in bed. A voice speaks to him in the night, and says :

"Dom Jean Derrien, you sleep on down, and I can never sleep !"

* A popular ballad in illustration of this idea of pilgrimage in verse in the original.

“Who comes at this time of night to my door to wake me? It is but three nights since I received the priesthood, and I have not slept a wink. I know not if it be the devil or the dead!”

“It is not the Evil One! It is I, your mother—she who bore you! It is I, your mother, Jean Derrien, who is here to make expiation! I am condemned to the fire and the flame if my son Jean come not to my assistance. I shall be ages in the flames if thou comest not to my succour, Dom Jean Derrien!”

“Tell me, poor little mother, what shall I do for thee?”

“In the old days, when I was amongst the living, I promised to go to Germany, and to the sanctuaries of St James in Spain, and in Turkey.”

“Tell me, my poor little mother; would it help you if I could go?”

“It would be the same to me, if thou didst go, as if I had gone myself!”

“Then I will go, little mother. Were it to be my death, I will help you!”

Jean Derrien said to his sister, who lived in his house,—

“Make ready for me fitting garments, that I may be seen to be a priest.”

His sister Marie answered him,—

“Now that all we had has been spent upon your studies, dost thou desire to leave the country?”

“Hold your peace, sister, and be not angry. It is for the mother that bore us. I am going to St James’s sanctuaries for my mother and yours.”

“Say not so, my brother. I will send another pilgrim in your stead.”

“No one shall go in my place! I will go, for indeed I must!”*

XXIII.—THE PILGRIMAGE OF MARIE SIGOREL

ONE morning, as I was getting up, Marie Sigorel entered my house. She was a neighbour of mine, who lived by undertaking pilgrimages for others.

* Literally translated from verse (“*Dom*” is a priestly title).

"Pardon me," she said, "but did I not hear you say you had made a vow to go on pilgrimage to the Chapel of St Sampson?"

"Yes, very likely."

"Shall we go together? I have undertaken to go there, to make a pilgrimage on behalf of a child for whom a vow had been made to take it there, but who died before the vow was fulfilled."

"Indeed," I answered, "I should like nothing better!"

I made a few preparations, and we started.

All went well at first. But no sooner had we gone beyond the boundaries of our parish than I fancied I perceived that Marie Sigorel dragged herself laboriously along.

"What is the matter?" I asked. "We have hardly gone a league, and you seem tired already!"

"Yes, it is strange, and I know not what it can be. I feel as though I had a weight on my shoulders, which gets heavier the further I go!"

We continued our journey all the same. But I had constantly to wait for Marie. She

kept turning round her head perpetually, too, in an anxious, restless manner.

"What are you looking for?" I asked.

I was not very comfortable myself. I seemed to hear a little faint footstep behind us, like a child's step. But we were quite alone on the road.

"Do you hear nothing?" said Marie Sigorel in reply to my question.

"Yes," I said; "what can it mean?"

"I do not know. We should do well to wait a while. Besides, I am exhausted. I feel as if I had a pound of lead on my shoulders."

We sat down on a heap of stones. I reflected somewhat sadly. Suddenly I had an inspiration.

"Marie Sigorel," I said, "did you pray by the grave of the dead child before starting?"

"No, I did not. I did not think of it."

"Oh! Now I understand it all! If you had gone to the churchyard and asked the child to walk before you, we should not have had it at our heels all the way, and you would

not have had the weight of the vow upon your shoulders ! ”

“ I have been very foolish ! But what had we better do ? ”

I should have been very much puzzled to know what to advise Marie Sigorel to do, when, fortunately, an old woman was seen coming towards us along the road. I went up to her, and explained to her the dilemma of my companion.

“ You are an aged person,” I added, “ and doubtless one who has had wide experience. Can you give us any advice ? ”

The old woman turned towards Marie Sigorel.

“ Have you an offering for the Saint in your pocket ? ” she enquired.

“ Yes,” answered Marie, “ I have five sous that I have been desired to put into the box.”

“ Very well, put them into your shoes, and put the soles of your feet upon them, praying God to hasten the beatitude of the poor little angel. Then you will be able to go on your way without hindrance.”

We blessed the old woman heartily.

After that, Marie Sigorel was able to walk easily, and we performed our pilgrimage as well as possible.

(Related by Lise Bellec, dressmaker, Port-Blanc.)

XXIV.—A DEAD PRIEST'S MASS

My grandfather, old Chatton, was returning one evening from Paimpal, where he had gone to receive some payments. It was on Christmas Eve. All day long it had snowed, and the road was quite white, and the fields and boundaries were white also. Fearing to lose his way in the snow, my grandfather walked his horse.

When he reached the old ruined chapel which stands by the wayside, he heard midnight strike. Thereupon, there came a tinkling sound of bells, as if for Mass.

"Is it possible," thought my grandfather; "the Chapel of St Christopher must have been restored. I did not notice it this morning as I went past. I certainly was not paying much attention."

The bells chimed on.

He determined to go and see what was going on.

The chapel looked new and beautiful in the moonbeams, and it was lighted up with torches, whose bright rays shone through the windows.

My grandfather Chatton tied his horse to a gate at hand, and entered the church of the Saint.

It was full of people, and they were all extraordinarily absorbed in prayer. There was not even the noise of coughing, which continually breaks the silence of a church.

The old man knelt down on the flagstones at the entrance to the church.

The priest was at the altar. His server passed to and fro within the sanctuary.

My grandfather said to himself: "So, after all, I shall hear midnight Mass!"

And he began to pray, as he always did, for the relations he had lost.

The priest turned towards the people to give a blessing, and my grandfather noticed the strange brightness of his eyes. And

strange too, to say, those eyes appeared to single him out amongst the crowd, and to fix themselves upon him. He felt rather uncomfortable.

The priest having taken a Host from the Ciborium, held it between his fingers, and said in a hollow voice: "Is there anyone here who can *receive*?"

No one answered.

Three times over the priest repeated his question. The same silence in the congregation. Then my grandfather rose. He was indignant at seeing all these people apparently indifferent to the priest's appeal.

"On my word as a Christian, Reverend Sir," he exclaimed, "I went to Confession this morning before starting, intending to Communicate to-morrow, being Christmas day. But if you desire it, I am ready at once to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The priest instantly descended the Altar steps, while my grandfather made his way through the crowd to kneel at the rails.

"May my blessing rest upon you, Chatton," said the priest when my grandfather had re-

ceived the Host : " Once on a Christmas Eve, a snowy night like this, I refused to go and bear the Viaticum to a dying person. That was three hundred years ago. I could not be delivered from Purgatory until one of the living should consent to receive Communion from my hand. Thanks to you, I shall now be released, and all the Souls of the Departed here present will also be released ! We shall meet again soon, Chatton, very soon, — in Heaven ! "

As soon as he had ceased to speak, the torches went out.

My grandfather found himself alone in the ruined building with no roof but the sky, amidst the rushes and nettles that grew in the deserted nave. He had some difficulty in getting through them. He mounted his horse and went on his way.

On his arrival at home he said to his wife : " You must make up your mind to lose me ere long. I have received my Viaticum. But let it console you to know that this Viaticum will carry me straight to Heaven ! "

He died a fortnight later.

(Related by Charles Corre, Penvenau, 1885.)

XXV.—THE MIDSUMMER “TANTAD”
OR BONFIRE

ON St John's night (June 24th), in all the villages and hamlets of Lower Brittany, the “*Tantad*” or Bonfire is lighted. When the flames have abated, all the people meet round the pile of ashes, and begin to recite the Litany for the Dead. It is always an old man who says it, the people answering. When the prayers are over, the old man rises, and every one present rises also, and all in a ring go round the “*Tantad*” in silence. At the third turn they stop, and each person picks up a flint and throws it upon the fire. This flint is called by the name given to the Dead, “*Anaon*.”

This rite over, the crowd disperses.

As soon as the living have departed, the dead come forward, for fire attracts the dead (it is said), the dead being always cold, even in the hot nights of June. They are glad to be able to warm themselves amongst the remains of the “*Tantad*.” They sit upon the stones on which it was built, on the “*Anaon*”

placed there expressly for them. And there they warm themselves till morning.

The next day the living come and visit the place.

Whoever finds his flint (Anaon) turned over, may expect to die during the year.

XXVI.—THE EVE OF ALL SOULS AND A POPULAR HYMN

ON All Saints night, the eve of All Souls day (“*Goël-ann-Anaon*”), the Dead come to visit the living.

The living have made, after Vespers, what is called “the Churchyard Procession.” The priests and singers have sung beside crypt and vault and tomb, the *Plaint* or “*Gwerz*” which follows :— *

“Come, Christians, amongst the tombs ! Behold the
bones

Of brother, sister, father, mother,
Neighbours and best-loved friends,
And see their piteous plight !

“Broken and crumbled you behold them,
Often fallen into dust.
Rank and wealth and beauty vanished,
Death has mingled them with earth.

* Literal Translation from Verse.

“ Rich and poor, the lord and servant,
Differ no more, but equal stand,
And naught remains but dust and rubbish,
We shrink from, but for pity's sake.

“ From this sad state to which they've come,
Though dead, they speak a weighty word,
They teach us that which well might help us,
While kept on earth by Christ our Lord.

“ List to their lesson, listen well,
Anxious to learn all they can teach,
' We too, have lived on earth,' they sigh,
' You too, like us, will ere long die.'

“ We too have loved this earth, and we
Have toiled and bargained, ate and drank.
Behold our shapeless lowly state,
The food of worms beneath the sod.

“ ‘ I was a strong and gallant man,—I was a nobleman,’
says one,
' And I was rich, and wise, and great,
But rank is gone, and so is wealth,
And beauty, knowledge, strength are lost.'

“ We have been called, our works, and we,
Before our Judge, our King, our God ;
Despise earth's joys, and hate its sins,
And clothe your souls with merits rare.

“ Ask you of us, ' where are your Souls ?'
Alas ! they linger far from Heaven !
In purgatorial fire they pay
Their earthly debt to their true God and Lord.

- " Amidst these flames unceasingly they cry,
Imploring you for prayers to aid them thence,
From the dark prison where they are enchained,
Haste, haste to succour them, do not delay !
- " We cry to you our children, parents, friends !
Forget us not when passing by our graves,
But say, ' God pardon and give rest
To *L'Annon* in Purgatory ' our dwelling-place.
- " An alms-deed, or a pious, heartfelt prayer,
A fast, still more, Communion or the Holy Mass,
Can mitigate our pains, or shorten them,
Or even lift us out our fiery pain !
- " O ! kindly priests, fore time our godly guides,
Along Salvation's path through earthly snares,
Keep pity burning in your hearts for us,
And give us of your goodness truest aid.
- " When to the holy altar you ascend,
And when God comes to you, list to our cry,
Out of the fire, we call and call to you
To make our peace with God for Jesus' sake !
- " And when our sins are purged we will not fail
To ask our God to answer all your prayers,
Pray for us and we will pray for you. If all helped a ll
No single soul could surely e'er be lost !
- " As floods of water quench the fiercest fire,
So is the purgatorial flame subdued and killed
By the great sacrifice you offer up !
O ! pray for our deliverance in Christ's name !

- "When the glad sun beams bright above the clouds
The whole world is suddenly steeped in light,
So shall we rise, shining like to stars,
By virtue of the sacrifice, our pains being passed.
- "Farewell, dear parents, brothers, sisters, friends,
Farewell, our children, and our dear ones, all !
We bid you once for all a long farewell.
The Judgment Day will give us back to you !
- "Give rest and peace, sweet Jesus, Lord and God,
To *L'Annon*, the dear and suffering dead,
Call them to Paradise to praise Thee,
With saints and angels, evermore !" *

This solemn "*Gwerz*," or ballad, ended, all go to their homes, and talk by the fireside of those who are departed.

The mistress of the house spreads a clean white cloth on the kitchen table, and lays thereon tankards of cider, pancakes and clotted cream. These preparations being completed,

* This hymn was translated from Breton into French by M. Le Braz, and taken from a collection of hymns in Breton, compiled by the Abbé Henry. It is indeed a national ballad song, and it needs to be heard in Breton intoned by rough peasant voices to its weird wailing air. "I shall never forget," says M. Le Braz, "the effect it produced upon me one All Souls' Eve in the poor little church-yard of Spézet, a village completely buried in the Black Mountain." The whole region of Central Cornouailles is a sort of pre-historic cemetery, abounding in mysterious "*Cairns*," and mounds, or "*tumuli*." It is truly the Land of the Departed. This mournful melody, this loud lamentation, echoing through the solitary "*landes*," possesses a wild grandeur which almost makes one tremble.

all retire to rest. The fire is kept burning on the hearth, an enormous log being put upon it called "*kef-am-Anaon*," "the Log of the Dead." About nine o'clock, or half-past nine, the sound of wailing voices breaks the silence. They are those of "The Death Singers," who go along the roads and from house to house to rouse the sleepers in the name of the Dead, to assist them with their prayers.

And this is their plaint:—

1

"Good people be not you amazed
If to your door we sadly come,
Jesus Himself it is who sends us,
To wake the sleepers in their beds.

2

"Yes, it is Christ our Lord who sends us,
To call you if asleep you be,
Even from your first sleep to rouse you,
To pray to God for us poor souls in pain.

3

"You in your quiet beds are resting,
Poor souls are we in bitter pain,
You all in peace are softly sleeping,
While we poor souls are in distress.

4

"Shrouded and coffined we lie still,
Our head upon a heap of straw,
Five feet of earth to cover us,
Naught else to-day is ours to hold.

5

“For Mary’s sake, sweet Jesu’s Mother,
List to our sorrowful complaint,
List to our sorrowful complaint,
Jesus in Heaven would have us come.

6

“Perchance your father or your mother
Amidst the purging fires may dwell,
Perchance your sister or your brother
May suffer in the cleansing flame!

7

“The fiery ordeal they enduring,
Flames all around them, every side,
Flames all about and all around them,
Wailing, implore you for your prayers.

8

“‘Those,’ they cry, ‘we reared and tended,
Desert us now full many a day,
Pray then for us, kind friends and neighbours,
Since our children do not pray.

9

“‘Pray for us all, kind friends and neighbours,
Since our children cease to pray,
Pray then for us our friends and brothers,
Ungrateful children do not pray!

10

“‘Hasten to leave your beds of ease,
And kneel bare-foot upon the floor,
All ye whom sickness has not stricken,
Or Death be beckoning with cold hand!’”

Often (says the narrator), on the eve of All Souls, the dead leaves may be heard to rustle on the paths, as if under the footsteps of invisible beings.

At daybreak the dead accompany the living to the parish church to hear the Mass that is said for them.

One year that my father was going alone to the Mass for the Dead, he suddenly heard someone hail him who appeared to wish to come up with him. A voice cried, "Hey ! *Toneun*, wait for me !"

He turned his head, but no one was to be seen. He nevertheless distinctly recognised the voice of my mother, who had died during the previous year.

(Related by *Marie Hostion*, *Quimper*, 1887.)

XXVIII.—WEEP NOT THE DEPARTED

ONCE upon a time a young girl lived at Coray, who had lately lost her mother, and who could not be consoled.

Day and night she did nothing but weep.

Sometimes she would rave like one demented, crying out, "I must see my mother again! I must see my mother!"

Not knowing what to do, the neighbours consulted the Rector, who was a holy man.

He went to see the girl, and instead of reproaching her for her lamentations, he spoke to her with gentleness and compassion. When she seemed somewhat calmer, he said to her, "You would be very pleased to see your mother again, would you not, my child?"

"Oh! Reverend Sir, all day long I implore God to grant me that favour!"

"Well, my child, He will give you your desire. Come to me this evening to Confession."

She came punctually. The Rector heard her Confession and gave her Absolution. "And, now," he added, "remain kneeling here saying your prayers, till you hear the church clock strike midnight. Then draw a little aside the curtain of the Confessional, and you will see your mother pass!"

Having said this, the Rector went away.

The girl remained praying until the time

he had fixed. Midnight struck. She threw aside the curtain and looked out into the church, and this is what she saw. A procession of the Dead came along the middle of the nave towards the sanctuary. They all went with strangely soft and silent footsteps, making no sound any more than do the clouds crossing the sky on a still summer day.

One Soul, however, the last in the procession, seemed to drag herself along painfully, bent down with the heavy weight of a bucket which she carried, filled to overflowing with water which looked black and unpleasant.

The girl recognised her mother, and was struck by the expression of displeasure which appeared on her face.

Having returned home she began to weep more than ever, feeling certain that her mother was unhappy in the other world. She was puzzled about that bucket of black water.

At daybreak she went to speak to the old Rector.

“Return this evening to your post,” re-

plied the priest, "perchance you will be enlightened on the matter."

. . . At midnight, once again, the Souls passed along silently, as on the previous night. The girl watched them through the opening of the curtain of the Confessional where she knelt. Her mother came, as before, the last of all. This time she was nearly bent double, for instead of a single bucket, she had two to carry, she staggered under the burden, and her face was dark with pain and care.

Seeing this, the girl could not resist addressing the dead woman. "Mother!" she cried, "Mother, why do you look so sad and grieved?"

Hardly had she spoken, when her mother rushed precipitately towards her, and exclaimed, shaking her apron violently: "*Why* do you look sad? Unhappy girl, when will you give over weeping for me? Do you not see that you are obliging me, at my age, to act as a water-carrier? These two buckets are filled with your tears, and if you do not cease to shed them I shall have to drag them

along until the day of Judgment! Remember that the Dead ("*L'Anaaon*") should not be wept. If Souls are happy, tears disturb their bliss. If they are not yet in Heaven, their progress is delayed. If they are lost, the tears shed for them come down upon them as a fiery rain, adding to their torments and increasing their regret.*

Thus spoke the dead woman.

When, on the following day, the girl repeated these words to the Rector, he asked her: "Have you wept since that, my child?"

"Indeed, no, and I will weep no more in future."

"Return, in that case, to-night to the church. I think you will find cause for rejoicing!"

The young girl did indeed rejoice, for her mother was walking at the head of the procession of departed Souls, her face bright and shining with the joy of Heaven!

(Related by Madame Hostion, Quimper, 1889.)

* The belief is wide-spread in Brittany that our sorrow increases the suffering of those we have lost. It finds expression in many stories and legends.

XXIX.—ANOTHER VERSION OF THE
SAME STORY

"I HAVE found this legend," says M. Le Braz, "in one form or other in most parts of Brittany," the moral and meaning being everywhere the same. The version, related to me at Port-Blanc, by Jeanne Marie Bénard deserves special mention.

According to it: As the girl, from her nook in the Confessional, watched the Souls pass silently in single file along the church she suddenly heard a sound like a faint and mournful peal of small, sad bells.

Then she saw her mother following the procession, and as she went along the melancholy chime came nearer, for her garment was bordered by these weary little bells. On the first night that the girl was in the church, rows of these bells appeared to reach her knee. Next night, they reached her waist; she seemed surrounded and encompassed by them.

"What mean these bells, dear mother?"

"Unhappy girl! can you ask me? Every tear that you shed for me changes into a bell

as heavy as lead. Had it not been for you, I should have been long since in Heaven! But how can I ascend thither with such a weight to carry? See, I can hardly put one foot before the other. When, when will you cease to keep me back from happiness? The bells too truly tell forth all my grief and pain!"

Is not this transformation of tears into bells, ringing a mournful chime, a strange, but most poetic fancy? asks the author. It figures also in a "*Gwerz*," or popular ballad.

XXX.—THE GHOST OF THE OLD SPINNER

THIS took place at Kiribot, near Penvénan, in a two-storied house. I lived on the ground floor with my wife and children. Upstairs there lived an old spinner.

This old man died.

I was at that time, as I still am, a poor village tailor; only I was young and active, and was never in want of a job. Indeed, I generally had more work than I could get

through. I often had to sit up half the night. My wife, who was a knitter, kept me company. The children were put to bed betimes, and then we each took up our work.

One evening when we were sitting up thus, working in silence, my wife, Soëz, said to me, all at once, "Do you hear nothing?"

And she pointed to the ceiling above our heads. I listened.

It was for all the world as though the old weaver had returned and was beginning to turn his wheel upstairs in his former room. From time to time the sound ceased, as though one spindle was finished with, and the weaver was stopping to take another. Then the *whirr* would begin again.

"Charlo," entreated my wife, "do let us go to bed!" She was pale and frightened. "I have heard it said," she went on, "that it is not well to sit up after midnight on Saturday evening."

We went to bed, but we could not close our eyes, fear kept us awake, and not that only, for the weaver's wheel went on till early dawn. The next evening, being Sunday, work, of

course, was out of the question. We went to bed almost as soon as the children, and that night our sleep was not disturbed.

But, on Monday night, on Tuesday night, and indeed on every night of the week, Saturday included, there was for ever in our ears the din and *whirr* of the wheel. It grew unbearable.

On Saturday night, as I was going to bed, I said to my wife, "This cannot go on! Tomorrow I shall go upstairs. I am determined to find out what it can be!"

I spent the afternoon in going to different inns and taverns, taking a pint at one, and a pint at another, to get up my courage, so that I came back to supper somewhat the worse of liquor.

My soup was waiting for me, kept hot on the fire. I took it quickly, and then said to my wife, "Light me a candle, Soëz, and I will go and see about the old spinner."

"Oh, no, Charlo! You will not really go up. It might bring us ill-luck!"

I am obstinate, especially after a few glasses of drink. I lighted the candle myself and

went up the stairs, but I had not climbed above six steps when I remained rooted to the spot. There came a terrible wind from the upper storey, a cold, icy wind, which nearly blew me down.

In a moment I was sobered, and consequently all my courage evaporated.

I came down the stairs.

"This will be a lesson to you," said my wife.

You may believe me or disbelieve me, but I assure you that for a whole year we were obliged to resign ourselves to the noise of that wheel. And even when the year had expired, our patience had not had any effect upon the dead man. Indeed we began to grow used to the annoyance. The *whirr* ceased to distress us as at first. Sometimes if it did not begin quite so early as usual, we were even a little anxious. We seemed to miss something.

I often used to say to Soöz, "It doesn't matter at all, so long as the old spinner doesn't wake the children."

But the children began to get bigger. One evening, one of them sprang up in its bed crying, "Mother, who is spinning?"

My wife rushed to him, and laid him down in bed again. "No one is spinning," she said.

I cried out from my work table, "It is the noise of sheep in the shed."

At last the child went to sleep again.

It now became evident that things could not continue thus. I went and looked up a son of the old spinner, who was a farmer in the neighbouring parish of Plonguiel.

"Look here," I said to him, "strange things are going on in our house. Your father *comes back!* He sits and weaves as of old in his room. It is my opinion that he stands in need of a Mass. If you do not get one said for him I will do so myself."

"I will see about it," he replied.

He went home with me, and he heard all that we had been so long hearing.

He was a good Christian man. At daybreak he went to the Presbytery of Penvénan, and made an offering of six francs for a Mass for his father's soul.

From that hour we lived in peace. And after that, I was never obliged to sit up after midnight on Saturday evening.

(Related by Charles Corre, a tailor at Penvénan, 1885.)

XXXI.—THE FIVE DROWNED SAILORS

Two sailors of Quimper were ordered to convey some casks of cider to Benn-Odet (a hamlet at the mouth of the Odet), in their sloop.

Very probably they lingered at the inn to which they took their cargo. Anyhow, they let the tide time pass. When they reached what is called the bay they found themselves in low water, and ran aground in the sand. Six hours must they wait for the next tide, in the darkness. They did their best under their luckless circumstances. They took down their sails, and wrapped themselves up in them. They were just falling asleep when a loud voice called them both, each by his own name.

“Helo ! Yann !”

“Helo ! Caourantinn !”

“Helo !” answered both Caourantinn and Yann.

It is thus that sailors hail one another.

“Come and seek us,” continued the voice.

The night was so dark that it was impossible to see two fathoms off, and the voice, although strong, seemed to come from afar. Moreover

it had a strange sound. Yann and Caourantinn nudged each other.

"I do believe," said Yann, "that it is *Yannik-an-Odd*." *

"I am of the same opinion," murmured Caourantinn, "we had best lie hidden."

And they wrapped themselves up closer in the sail.

But their curiosity, after all, overcame their fear. Yann was the first to peep out of his wrapping.

"Do look!" he said to his companion.

The depths of the bay, to their left hand, seemed suddenly to shine with a light that came up out of the sea. And in this light was outlined a large white boat, and in this boat there stood five men with their arms stretched out. These five men were all alike clothed with white tarpaulin with black dots like tears.

"It is not '*Yannik-an-ôd*,'" said Yann, "these are souls in pain. Speak to them Caourantinn, for you have made your Easter Communion."

* "*Yannik-an-Odd*" is a name given collectively by the Bretons to the ghosts of drowned sailors, not friendly to the living.

Caourantinn made a sounding tube with his hands, and shouted, "We cannot come to your assistance, we are aground here. Come you to us, or tell us what you desire. We will do what we can."

The two sailors then saw the five ghosts sit down each in his place. One took the helm, the others began to row. But as they all rowed on one side only, the boat, instead of coming on, only turned round and round.

"What fools they are!" growled Yann; "they are fresh water sailors with a vengeance. I have a good mind to go and show them how to manage the boat. Perhaps it's that they want. What say you, Caourantinn? Will you stay and look after our boat?"

"No, I will not. If you go, I shall go too!"

"After all there would be no danger in leaving the boat where it is. There will be another hour before the tide turns. Come along then, comrade, with the help of God!"

The water hardly came half-way up their legs, so shallow was it.

They made their way along the sand-bank towards the white boat.

The nearer they came the more the ghostly sailors bent upon their oars, and faster and faster did the boat go round.

When the two comrades were close upon it, suddenly it sank, and as it went down the light disappeared, which had showed them the corner of the bay. For one moment the sea and the darkness intermingled. Then in the place where the four rowers had sat, four lighted tapers suddenly appeared. By their fitful light Yann and Caourantinn perceived that the fifth ghost, he, who just now had taken the helm, was under water up to his head and shoulders.

They stopped terror-stricken. In sooth, they would rather have been anywhere but where they were. But having gone so far they did not like to draw back. Moreover, the man's face was sad, ah, so sad, that it must have been a bad Christian who would not have felt pity for him.

"Are you sent by God, or do you come from the devil?" asked Yann.

As though he had guessed their thoughts and fears, the man said to them,—

"Fear nothing. We are five souls in terrible suffering, and my four companions are suffering even more than I am. The sadness you see in my face is nothing compared with that of theirs. For more than a hundred years have we waited here to find a man willing to help us."

"If good will alone be needed, we will do what we can for you," answered Yann and Caourantinn.

"You must go, if you please, to the Rector of Plomelin, and ask him to have five Masses for the dead said for us at the High Altar of the church on five successive days. And will you also take care that there shall be thirty-three persons present at each of these Masses on each day, be they young or old, men or women."

"*Doué da bardono ann Anaon!*" (God give pardon to the Dead!) murmured the two sailors, making the sign of the Cross. "We will do our best to relieve you!"

The following day, Yann and Caourantinn went to see the Rector of Plomelin. They paid beforehand for the twenty-five Masses

They attended them all themselves, and to make sure of the congregation of thirty-three, they brought daily over from Quimper their wives and children, relations and friends. Never had so many people been seen at once at Low Mass at Plomelin.

On the sixth day Yann said to Caourantinn, "Shall we go out to the bay to-night to ask if we have done all we could?"

"Let us go," he answered.

So when night came they went down the stream in their sloop. They anchored at the place where they had run aground six days before. And there they waited. Ere long the light they had then seen began to rise out of the sea. Then the white boat stood out in it, and in the boat the five ghosts once again appeared. They were still clad in white tarpaulin, but the black dots were no longer on them. Their arms, instead of being outstretched before them, were crossed upon their breasts. Their faces were bright and shining. And all at once there came a sound of music so touching and so exquisite that Caourantinn and Yann could have wept with joy.

The five ghosts all together bent their heads to the two sailors, who heard them softly utter, "*Trugaré! Trugaré! Trugaré!*" ("We thank you! we thank you! we thank you!")

(Related by Marie Mauchec, dressmaker, Quimper, 1891.)

XXXII.—~~"YANNIC-ANN-ÔD"~~ *Yannik-an-ôd*

THE drowned, whose bodies have not been recovered and buried in consecrated ground, wander continually along the shore.

They may often be heard in the night wailing piteously,—"*Tou! Tou! Tou!*" * *Lon*

People in the Cornouailles country say to one another, when this cry is heard: "It is *Yannic-ann-ôd*" ("*Little John of the Beach*") wailing.

All the wailing drowned are called collectively, and separately, "*Yannic-ann-ôd*." "*Yannic-ann-ôd*" is not malicious, so long as his melancholy wail is not responded to or imitated. But woe to the imprudent man who plays that game! If you answer him

* Cornouailles, or Cornwall, takes its name from "*Kerné*," ("*la Corné*"), the land's point. This name, given to Cornouailles in Brittany (as to our Cornwall), represents its position as an extremity, which in Latin became "*Gornu Galliae*."

once, "*Yannic-ann-ôd*" springs towards you; if you answer twice he comes nearer, and if you answer three times, he breaks your neck!

A farm-servant was coming home one fine evening from taking the cattle into the fields, the summer being sufficiently advanced to send them out at night. As he went along the beach he heard the sound of the sabots of "*Yannic-ann-ôd*" upon the shingles. This servant was a sharp fellow. He knew all the stories that were told on winter evenings about "*Yannic-ann-ôd*," and he had made up his mind to find out all he could about them on the first possible chance. "'Pon my word," he said to himself, "I should like to know for certain!"

Like a sensible youth, however, he waited till he came nearer to the farm before answering the Wanderer of the shore, who kept shouting "*Tou*," in shrillest, saddest tones.

At length he in his turn loudly shouted "*Tou!*"

Doubtless "*Yannic-ann-ôd*" was amazed

at such audacity, for he grew silent all at once. Nevertheless, the servant observed that he was approaching him. His shadow stood out at some distance off, across his path in the moonlight. Then once more the cries began. This time the servant refrained from echoing them until he had reached the middle of the farmyard.

"*Yannic-ann-ôd*" seemed also very near the gate.

He shouted with increasing wrath, "*Tou ! Tou ! Tou !*"

There was provocation in his plaint.

The servant set out and ran as fast as he could, as though he had wings on his heels. Having reached the threshold of the farmhouse he cried for the third time, "*Tou !*" as he shut the heavy oak door.

A terrible blow echoed upon the wood, sufficient to shatter it to pieces. And the voice of "*Yannic-ann-ôd*" was raised threateningly : "I will let it pass this time, but if you begin it again, I will do for you !"

The servant thought that about enough.

(Related by René Alain, Quimper, 1889.)

XXXIII.—THE WINDING SHEET OF
MARIE JEANNE

MARIE JEANNE HÉLARY had lived for many years alone in a little house close to the shore. Her greatest delight was to watch the piles of fine linen which she spun, and which she took to the village to be woven, growing higher and larger on the shelves of her wardrobe.

One evening she fell ill, went to bed, and never got up again.

Her nearest neighbours were the Rojon couple, whose farm was about a mile and a half from her cottage, across the fields.

The poor old woman had lived alone, and died alone.

The next day, farmer Gonéri Rojon, having gone down to the shore for some fish, was surprised to see Marie Jeanne's door closed.

"She has perhaps gone on a pilgrimage," he said to himself.

He told his wife on his return.

Two days passed on.

On the third day Rojon's wife said to him,

"I shall walk down to Marie Jeanne's house to see if she has come back."

When she reached the old woman's house, she found the door still shut. It occurred to her to look through the window, and she saw a very sad sight. The corpse of Marie Jeanne was lying half out of bed, the head upon the "*banc - tossel*" (bed - bench, or steps).

Rojon's wife ran breathlessly back to the farm. "Bring a crow-bar," she got out at last, "and come with me!"

The house door was soon opened by the crow-bar.

A pestiferous odour came from the dead body, which was becoming decomposed. Nevertheless, Rojon and his wife raised it from its position and laid it on the table.

"We must see to the burial," said the man. "Look in the wardrobe and see if you can find a clean piece of linen to shroud her, for the sheets upon the bed are ragged and soiled." When Rojon's wife opened the wardrobe, she stood amazed and delighted.

The shelves of the press were piled with heaps of new linen, white as snow, and soft as silk, all smelling of lavender.

“Oh, what lovely linen!” cried the woman. And immediately the Evil One put a covetous thought into her mind.

You know how dearly housewives love good linen, and how proud they feel when there is a great wash on hand, to hear it rattling in the wind as it lies upon the meadow grass, and then to see it laid in heaps upon the shelves of their oaken presses. The dream of Rojon’s wife had always been to be able, like Marie Jeanne, to spend her days in spinning fine flax, and to have it woven into nice linen. But, poor woman, she had so much to see to in her house, having a husband and four children, to say nothing of cattle and poultry to care for. During the twelve years she had been married, her spinning-wheel had stood idle in a corner of the kitchen, and the only spinners were the spiders!

And so the Evil One whispered to her: “You and your husband are here alone together in the dead woman’s house. Not one

of the neighbours is yet aware of her death, and no one knows exactly what her press contains. No one therefore would be surprised were it to be found empty.

“There is no one to claim inheritance, for Marie Jeanne Hélyary lived alone, and gave out that she had lost all belonging to her. What she has left would go under the hammer for the benefit of the Government, which is richer than any one else, and which has never done anything for Marie Jeanne Hélyary. You, on the other hand, have always done all you could for her, and you are now going to render her the last services, and see to her burial. Is it not fair that you should take whatever you choose from the house, for she herself has no further need of anything?”

Thus spoke the devil, the ceaseless tempter!

Léan Rojon was an honest woman, but she was a daughter of Eve, and, like Eve, she listened to the devil.

“Look here, Gonéri,” she said, “there is no difficulty about a shroud. There is sufficient linen here to shroud a hundred corpses. Come and look!”

Like his wife, Gonéri Rojon was wonder-struck.

"If you will," she continued, "we can take all this linen, except just what is needed to shroud poor old Marie Jeanne."

"After all," meditatively observed Rojon, "why should others have it rather than we?"

"There is enough here to make six dozen fine sheets, as many tablecloths, and at least two dozen shirts, to say nothing of undergarments for women and children. What do you think, Gonéri?"

"Yes, indeed, I agree with you. You had better stay here to watch beside the old woman. Meanwhile, I will take down the pieces of linen, and carry them to our house. No one will hear or know anything of it. I will leave you only one piece, out of which you can make a shroud while I am going backwards and forwards."

And Gonéri Rojon started, loaded like an ass. He did not yet feel the burden of his sin upon his shoulders. Yet it should have weighed heaviest of all upon him!

In half-an-hour he had returned.

He found that the corpse of Marie Jeanne was not yet shrouded. His wife, on her knees upon the ground beside a piece of linen, her scissors in her hand, could not make up her mind to use them !

“ ’Pon my word ! ” exclaimed Gonéri, as he entered ; “ it doesn’t seem to me that you have got on much ! ”

“ Don’t you think,” answered Lénan, “ that it would really be a great pity to throw away this beautiful white linen on a poor decaying corpse ? Doesn’t it seem to you that old Marie Jeanne, now that she is dead, would just as soon be wrapped in the sheets she slept in when she was alive ? ”

“ No doubt you are right,” said Rojon, who, like many husbands of his class absorbed in agricultural toil, let his wife think for him, as well as for herself.

It was therefore determined that the new piece of linen should be left uncut, and that the old woman should be buried in her old sheets. And this was done.

That evening the passing-bell rang out from the church, telling of a death in the village.

A carpenter furnished the coffin, in which Marie Jeanne was hastily stretched, but poorly shrouded, as the body was, becoming disagreeable. Gonéri Rojon undertook all the funeral expenses.

All round the neighbourhood his generosity was applauded. On the following Sunday the Rector spoke of it in the pulpit, calling him and his wife true followers of our Lord.

They did not show any vanity because of these praises, which made people think better of them still.

But, underneath, they had not easy consciences. Lénan soon consoled herself in admiring the orderly and attractive appearance of Marie Jeanne's linen, lying in her hitherto empty press. But it was not quite so with Gonéri Rojon. The poor man could neither work nor eat nor sleep comfortably.

One night that he lay half awake, he suddenly started up. He heard someone knocking at the door.

"Who is there?" he asked.

No answer came.

He thought it might be some belated

drunkard, although the approach to his farm was narrow. "Who is there?" he enquired a second time, and then a third time.

No reply came.

"Confound it all!" he cried,—furious because frightened; "I am determined to make you tell me who you are, and whether you come from God or from the devil!"

He made as though he would get up, but he had no sooner raised his head from his pillow than he felt his hair begin to stand on end with fear. The house door was wide open. He felt sure, all the same, that he had firmly bolted it before going to bed. But that was not all. The tablecloth, which had been thrown over the bread on the kitchen table, was being gradually drawn back, just as if it had been a sheet which a sleeper, finding the night hot, was little by little pushing from off him. Then, on the outspread tablecloth, there appeared the outline of a corpse. The loaf of bread, which was hardly begun, seemed to serve as its pillow. Ere long, Gonéri saw the head suddenly raised. He shut his eyes, desirous of seeing no more.

But he forgot to stop his ears, and he could not help hearing the little light footfall of the old woman as she went to and fro and up and down in the house.

Then there came the creaking of what seemed like the heavy doors of a press, ill-oiled and grating on their hinges.

After that, a broken, tremulous voice with mocking mimicry reiterated the exclamation that had fallen from Lénan's lips on first seeing Marie Jeanne's linen press. "Ah! what lovely linen! Oh! what lovely linen!"

Gonéri Rojon half opened his eyes. He felt a longing to see, beyond his will power to restrain.

The moonbeams came obliquely through the hinges of the door, and traced a great star of white light all across the earthen floor. Just outside it an old woman was kneeling. In her right hand she held a pair of scissors. Gonéri only saw her side face, but he was able to recognise her. She was the dead Marie Jeanne!

"It would be a pity," she went on saying to herself, continuing to mimic Lénan's voice

and manner, "to cut up such a beautiful piece of linen to wrap up a poor decaying corpse ; . . . old Marie Jeanne, being dead, would just as soon sleep in the sheets she had on her bed while living."

Gonéri Rojon felt a cold sweat break out all over his body.

The old woman made a pause, and then went on, "Well, no ! no ! no ! I am determined to be buried in the linen that I spun !"

Then she repeated three times, with emphasis,—

"I *must* have my shroud ! I *must* have my shroud ! I *must* have my shroud !"

Having said this, she disappeared.

Out of consideration for his wife, Gonéri had not awaked her. At dawn she awoke of herself, and then Gonéri said to her, "Wife, what do you suppose is the first thing you must do when you are up ?"

"Yes, husband ; I am going to gather green rushes for the cattle, and then I shall wash and dress the children."

"No," said Gonéri ; "you must make yourself tidy, and try to get to the church at the

time that the Rector hears Confessions, and you must tell him of our sin in Confession."

"What are you talking about, Gonéri? What business is it of yours?"

"I have not finished," continued the man. "I shall go with you, carrying on my shoulders the stolen linen which is there in the press. Do not forget to ask the Rector what is to be done with it."

"What is to be done with it?" answered the woman angrily. "I know best about that,—I, and not the Rector! Don't worry yourself about that linen!"

"I have cause to be worried," said Gonéri. "Your peace and mine, in this world and in the next, is at stake."

Then he told his wife what had happened in the night.

Léan no longer made objections. She herself put the bundle of linen on her husband's shoulders, and went on before him towards the village. Having reached the church, she crept into the Rector's Confessional, whilst Gonéri waited with his burden down near the Font.

When Lénan had confessed everything, the Rector said, "Come back this evening, my daughter, and let your husband come too. As for the linen, you will leave it in the Sacristy, and I will exorcise it. I hope that before this evening I shall have ridded it of the evil influence which now hangs about it, and which is nothing else but the sin of you both."

Lénan and Gonéri returned to the farm, but the evening found them back in the church, saying prayers with the Rector.

When midnight struck, the Rector beckoned to Lénan.

"The time has come," he said. "Fetch the pieces of linen out of the Sacristy. Do not be surprised to feel them as light as a feather. Go and spread them out, one at a time, on Marie Jeanne's new-made grave. Be especially careful not to spread a second, until the first has disappeared. Your husband and I will remain here praying while you are doing this. When you have quite finished, you will come and tell us all that has happened and what you have seen."

Lénan did not exactly enjoy going thus to

make restitution at midnight in the village churchyard. And Gonéri was not altogether comfortable, as he remained by the Rector's side in the church, praying for his wife's safe return. He was greatly relieved when he saw her reappear through the Sacristy door, safe and sound. She was, however, trembling violently.

"Well, Lénan?" said the Rector.

"Oh!" she replied, "I have seen what no one else has ever seen, or will ever see!"

"Explain yourself, Lénan?"

"Reverend Sir, I went straight and unfolded one piece of linen over the grave. A wind immediately arose, and the piece of linen, making a sighing sound, was carried away. I unfolded a second piece. The same wind arose as before, and the second piece of linen was carried away like the first, but without any sound. Then I spread out the third. This one made a slight rustling like a breeze in spring through the young leaves, and then it spread itself out like a sail, and flew away from me up towards the stars. The earth above the grave then seemed to open, and I saw Marie Jeanne lying bare and uncovered in

its depths. I unfolded a fourth piece of linen. This time, instead of flying upwards, it sank into the ground, and the dead woman wrapt herself in it, making a shivering noise as if very cold. There still remained the fifth and last piece. I was going to open it and spread it out when four angels from Heaven took it out of my hands, and I heard a most melodious voice pronounce these words, 'You are forgiven!' And that was all."

"And enough!" said the Rector. "You and your husband may go in peace, Lénan. But ever remember that if it is wrong to rob the living it is still more horrible to rob the dead. As for Marie Jeanne Hélyary, you may rest assured that she will trouble you no more."

(Related by Baptiste Geffroy, Penvénan, 1886.)

XXXIV.—A VERY PRECIOUS STONE

A GREAT feast had been held that day at Kerbérennes, the great house of the parish of Langoat. The youngest of the children was almost an infant, and it was feared that he

might cry, and disturb the guests, so the servant was desired to take him out, and amuse him during the dinner. The maid to whom the task was committed could think of nothing better to amuse the baby than to throw stones into a large and deep reservoir that stood in a corner of the farmyard. The pebbles made a splash as they fell in. The sound delighted the child, so the maid went on with the game till the guests left the table. She was then called in to assist in washing up.

She was thus occupied, when all on a sudden a shower of pebbles was dashed against the front of the house. Some fell even in the middle of the kitchen, through the window, and through the open door.

The maid started aside greatly amazed. Pebbles rattled violently against the furniture, and plates fell smashed by the girl's side. She screened her face with her hand and tried to see from whence all these stones could come. She came to the conclusion that they came up out of the reservoir, and doubted not they were the same she had thrown in a while before. She said nothing about *that* to her master and

mistress, but simply showed them the stones lying about, which had occasioned so much mischief.

The proprietor of Kerbérennes set it down to the spite of a neighbour who had not been invited to the feast. As for his wife, you may fancy how distressed she was to see her polished furniture scratched, and her plates and dishes broken to pieces.

That night they all went to bed in no good humour.

The young servant was the last up, as was her duty. She had covered over the kitchen fire with ashes, and was just about to go to her bed, when there entered a poor, bent, most miserable looking old woman, from whose ragged garments water was dripping.

She shivered so terribly, poor old creature, that the maid felt great pity for her, in spite of the unseemliness of the hour she had chosen to come to a Christian house.

"You seem very cold, my good woman?" said the servant.

"Yes," said the old woman; "I am cold. I am indeed cold!"

"It must be raining fast for your clothes to be so wet?"

As a matter of fact, it was a starlight night, without a cloud; but the girl's head had been so dazed by the occurrences of the day, that she had no idea of what the weather was.

"Come close to the hearth, good mother," said she. "I will light up the fire."

The poor woman sat down on a stool at the corner of the hearth, but she went on shivering with cold in spite of the flaming fire of dry wood which the servant had re-kindled.

And as she shivered she sighed and sighed! "Alas, my God! Alas, then, my God!"

"For our Saviour's sake," entreated the young servant, "do not go on lamenting in that way. My master sleeps hard by, and he went to his bed very cross. If you wake him, it will be the worse for you!"

She had hardly done speaking in a low voice when the master did awake.

"What's the reason for this fire?" he cried.

He could not see the old beggar woman. Had he seen her he would have come out of bed, though he did not desire to do

so, being heavy with sleep after the day's festivities.

He repeated his question, however, although half asleep.

"What's the reason for this fire?"

The servant was about to answer, when three violent knocks sounded on the bed-head.

The master became still.

Who had given those three knocks? The servant could not imagine. The old woman had not stirred. With her hands crossed upon her knees she might have been a corpse, but for the ceaseless murmuring of her lips, and the shivering of her poor old frame.

The servant felt her afternoon's fright coming back upon her with double force.

"Warm yourself, good mother," she said. "You have plenty of fuel near you to keep in the fire." And she sped to her bed at the other end of the kitchen. Having laid herself down, she feigned to sleep, but she kept watch, although very drowsy.

At the first cock-crow she beheld the poor woman rise up and disappear.

"She must be a dead woman," she thought to herself. "She had to go, because the hour was come!"

As soon as the dawn appeared, the girl dressed herself, although she had had no rest, and with a rapid step made for the village. At the church she found the Rector, vesting himself for the celebration of the first Low Mass.

"In God's name, Reverend Sir, hear my Confession at once!"

And she told him all the story of the reservoir and that of the beggar woman.

The Rector said to her: "Peace be with you! All this matter will be cleared up, for it has all happened by the permission of God. The poor woman will visit you again. Be ready to receive her, and do so, as you did yesterday, as best you can."

The poor girl returned home comforted.

That evening the Rector's prophecy was fulfilled. The old woman re-appeared. The servant had taken care to have a good fire ready, and the hearth was all aglow.

As on the night before, the beggar woman,

when she had seated herself, began sighing, but she no longer shivered, and her wretched clothing was almost dry; even her sighs seemed less dismal.

The girl felt more at her ease with her; still she slept no more than she had done the night before, and at dawn she went again to the Rector.

“This evening,” he said, “the dead woman will come to you again. It will be for the third time. You have gained the right to question her. Ask her why her garments were so dripping the day before yesterday. I am sure she will explain everything to you.”

This rector was a wise adviser. He understood his priestly office as few do.

On this evening a servant made up a real bonfire on the hearth, like a “*Tantâd*” for St John’s night. At the usual hour she saw the old woman enter and take her old place on the stool in the chimney corner, not only without shivering, but also without a sigh.

The servant began the conversation.

"May God be praised, you seem in a better condition, good mother! How was it that your clothes were so wet the first time you came here?"

"I can tell you now, my good child," answered the poor woman; "for fifty years I have been making my expiation in the reservoir in this farmyard."

"Then I am afraid I may have harmed you the day before yesterday, when I threw stones into it to amuse the child?"

"On the contrary, you have delivered me! I could not get out of that cistern except with a stone in my hand, a stone thrown by the hand of a living person."

Saying this, the old woman began feeling in the pocket of her petticoat.

"Here is the stone," she exclaimed, "I will leave it with you that it may bring you good luck!"

"But then," asked the girl, "it was not you, was it, who threw back out of the reservoir all the stones I had dropped into it, into the house?"

"Certainly not. It was my evil angel.

Happily, he was not able to throw back every one. I held fast in my hand the stone that was to set me free. That stone I have now given to you. Keep it carefully. I could not make you a better present in return for the service you have rendered me. But if you part with it your good luck will go with it."

"I thank you," said the servant. "I will treasure this most precious stone as the apple of my eye! If you are now going to Heaven, let my mother know that you have seen me."

"Yes," answered the poor woman, "but I am going to ask you yet to do me another kindness."

"Speak! I am at your service."

"I require two Masses, which you must get said for me, in the chapel of St Carré, by the Rector who has bidden you treat me kindly."

"It shall be done."

The servant had no sooner uttered these words than the old woman vanished in a thin, white mist.

The Rector of Langoat went on the follow-

ing Sunday to St Carré, and there celebrated the two Masses solicited by the beggar woman.

The young servant heard both. As she was returning bare-foot, she saw a little cloud of dust arise before her on the road, and this little cloud gradually assumed the appearance of the poor old woman, only her face looked quite young, and shone with unearthly brightness.

The dead woman's expiation was past !

(Related by Marie Corre, Penvénan, 1886.)

XXXV.—A NIGHT IN A CRYPT

It had been a great day at Guernoter. The principal servants from several neighbouring farms had met there to give assistance. The supper had been abundant, with plenty to drink also, according to custom. When they had all eaten and drunk as much as they wanted, they made a circle round the fire, the men lighted their pipes, the women went to their spinning-wheels, and

a general conversation took place. First of all, as may be imagined, they discussed the events of the day and its work. The labourers belonging to Guernoter, and those from the other farms who had come to help them, had started at three o'clock that morning for St Michel-en-Grève,—a journey of five leagues—a long journey there and back over heaps of wet sand.

They discussed the carts and horses, praised the great grey horse belonging to Roc'h-Laz, the best worker on the road, and talked about the villages they had passed through, all agreeing that the best inn for cider was that kept by Moullek at Plonmillian.

"Yes," added Mandez Merrien, a young bachelor, "and if they would give me a dozen pints of that, every day, I would willingly personate the "*Ankou*" of Plonmillian for a week or two!" *

* "*L'Ankou*" is the impersonation of death. In the church of Plonmillian there is a curious dust-covered statuette, said to be that of Yves de Plonmillian, which, being of somewhat terrible and threatening appearance, fulfils, in the popular imagination, the idea of the "*Ankou*," the foreteller of death.

"Do not joke on that subject, Mandez," said the mistress of the house; "you may have to do with the "*Ankou*" before you think!"

This suggestion turned the conversation to the subject of death and the dead. A servant quoted the case of some one who had mocked at the "*Ankou*" of Plonmillian, and who was that same evening found drowned.

"These are old women's stories," laughed one of the company.

"The dead are dead," added another; "the dead cannot harm the living."

"All the same," replied the servant, "if you were forced to spend the night in the crypt you would lower your tone!"

All the young men exclaimed against this, in chorus.

When men have had a little to drink they are ready to cope with the devil, horns and all!

That is, so far as words go. In action they are not always so courageous.

And this was certainly the case that evening at Guernoter.

Yvon Lonarn, the master, had only drunk moderately, but some of his guests had taken too much. He had placed himself in a nook of the chimney corner, from whence he could watch all that was going on amongst them.

On hearing the young men crying out thus against the servant for her speech, he joined in.

"Well," he said, speaking very seriously, "it shall not be said that I let slip such a fine opportunity of proving the mettle of you young fellows. I will give a six franc piece to-morrow morning to whichever of you has the courage to spend this night in the crypt!"

The youths looked at each other, forcing a laugh, and making believe to treat the matter as a mere jest. One or two crept towards the door.

"Come, come!" Lonarn continued, "do you take it in? I said a six franc piece. A six franc piece to be gained all in one night. You don't often get the chance of such a wind-fall. Who accepts?"

Not one accepted. Everyone sought a pretext. Mandez Merrien was the first to find one.

"I would willingly accept the wager," he said, "if the day's work had not been so hard and long, but to-night, Yvon Lonarn, I would not take twenty six-franc pieces in exchange for my bed of hay in the stable at Mezon-Meur."

And thereupon he rose to go away.

The rest applauded his view, and prepared to follow his example.

The master of Guernoter was on the point of launching out upon them a few words of scathing irony, when from amongst the women a timid little voice was heard.

"Master," said the little voice, "would you give me the same as one of them? Would you give me six francs if I did what they dare not do?"

The questioner was a little girl of thirteen or fourteen years of age, but so small and fragile that she did not look more than ten. Her name was Monica (or Moník, as she was called). She had no other name, for she had no knowledge of who her parents were. She had been taken in at the farm out of compassion, and she acted as cow-keeper. She

had no wages, but was fed and clothed. Her voice was hardly ever heard in the evenings when the household sat round the fire. She wound the thread spun by the other servants, and she fulfilled her task silently and apart, though she might occasionally be heard murmuring a prayer, for she was devout, and religious ideas were more to her than aught besides.

Great was the astonishment of the farmer's wife when she heard Monik's voice, and her seemingly ill-considered words.

"Listen to the little minx," she exclaimed. "Is it not truly said that money is the ruin of souls? Here is a wretched girl, who, for six francs would risk her life and her soul, if she might do as she would. Are you not ashamed of yourself, you little good-for-nothing?"

"Believe me, mistress, were I to gain this money, I would not use it badly," humbly replied the little cow-keeper.

"You shall make whatever use you please of it," said the farmer, "if you can gain it. I am not sorry to see a wee woman like you taking up a wager which daunted those men."

But if you accept, we shall go with you to the crypt ; we shall shut the door upon you, and you will not come out till daybreak, when we shall come and let you out."

And this was done, in spite of the indignant protests of the mistress of the farm.

The crypt was full of bones. But as soon as Moník entered, the bones drew up against the walls, piling themselves upon each other, so as to make space for her to lie down, as if she was in her bed.

Moník, first of all knelt down and begged the dead to protect her, and then laid herself on the dank earth, saturated with the odour of death.

Hardly had she stretched herself upon it, than a gentle drowsiness fell upon her, and sweet, soft, distant melodies hovered about her, lulling her to sleep.

She forgot that she was in a charnel-house. She seemed to be *away*, she knew not where, in a land of sapphire blue, but all was dim, and she could see nothing distinctly. She tried to open her eyes, but her eyelids were as heavy as lead.

And thus she slept the whole night through, a supernatural slumber.

At daybreak she woke, surprised to find herself in the crypt. The door was open, and the master of Guernoter was saying to her, "Here is the six franc piece, Monik. It is yours, you have honestly earned it."

"I thank you, master," said the girl.

To the church she went with her silver piece. The Rector was in his Confessional. She entered it, told him what she had done, and handing him the money, begged him to say a Mass for the soul in Purgatory who had most need of help.

"May be, one of my unknown family may benefit by it," she said. "For this object I have always dreamed of earning something, ever since I was old enough to understand. The Dead know that, and they watched over me last night."

"Very well," answered the Rector, after giving her Absolution; "you shall have your desire. The Mass I am about to say shall be for your intention."

When the Mass was over, and she was ready

to set out with lightened heart for Guernoter, she came across a white-haired man in the porch. He looked as old as Adam, and yet he was upright, and he walked without difficulty.

He stopped the girl, and made her a low bow. "Young maiden," he said, "will you take this note to Kersaliou for me?"

"Certainly, venerable sir," she answered, taking the note he held out to her.

The old man smiled so kindly and thanked her so gratefully that Monik could not help thinking about his goodness as she went along towards Kersaliou. Never before had she felt so happy and light-hearted "What a fine face he had!" she thought to herself.

Kersaliou was an estate, to which, before the Revolution, the farm of Guernoter belonged. An old avenue of beech trees led up to it. When the little cow-keeper entered this avenue, the leaves of the beech trees began to rustle, and well-nigh to sing, as if each of them was a bird.

"I don't know how it is," thought Monica; "but I feel as if some wonderful happiness

was coming to me to-day. It seems to me as if my meeting with the old man would bring me good luck ! ”

Just as she was going into the court in front of the Château of Kersaliou, she met its proprietor. She wished him “ Good-morning.”

“ Where are you going, little one ? ” he enquired.

“ To your house, Monsieur de Kersaliou.”

“ And what do you want at my house ? ”

“ To take you this note, which has been put into my hands for you.”

And she related her encounter in the church porch, and told how grand and beautiful the old man looked, notwithstanding his great age.

“ Should you recognise him, do you think, if you were to see his picture ? ”

“ Of course I should recognise him.”

“ Come with me, then.”

He took her into the Château and through all the rooms. Although Kersaliou had lost much of its former magnificence, the rooms had still an imposing appearance. On the walls, hung, in richly gilded frames, portraits

of the most celebrated members of the noble family of de Kersaliou.

The present proprietor led Monica from one to another of these. Stopping before each, he asked her, "Is this he?"

"No!" she each time answered; "it is not he."

Up to every picture the owner led Monica, and she looked attentively at each as she came before it, but in none could she recognise the venerable and imposing countenance of the old man she had seen in the porch.

The owner of Kersaliou stood silent a moment, with an anxious, disappointed air.

Suddenly he put his finger to his forehead. "Follow me to the loft," said he to the girl.

This loft was full of things belonging to the olden times,—tattered hangings, broken statues, and old pictures riddled with holes. The gentleman began searching amongst the pictures. As he extricated them, one by one, out of the heap of rubbish, he handed them to Monica, who wiped them with the back of her apron.

"Here he is!" suddenly exclaimed the girl.

She had recognised the face of the old man, though the portrait was somewhat discoloured.

"All right," said the gentleman. "Now we will go down to my study.

He opened a big book, in which all the names of all the members of his family were inscribed.

"My dear Monica," he said, "the old man you met in the porch was the great-grandfather of my grandfather. He has been dead three hundred years. For three hundred years he has suffered in Purgatory for the want of a Mass. And it was necessary that this Mass should be paid for spontaneously by a poor person, out of his or her small earnings. You have done this, as is testified by the note you have brought me from the dead man, and which is in his own writing. Thanks to you, my ancestor of six generations ago has been delivered. He bids me recompense you in a manner that shall be worthy of him and of me. For the future, you shall be a servant in my house, and I promise that you shall be well treated. Do you consent to this?"

The poor little cow-keeper was so far from

expecting such good luck, that she seemed as if rooted to the spot and unable to articulate a single word.

But the proprietor of Kersaliou quite comprehended that surprise and delight kept her silent.

From that day forward she lived at the Château, and she was very happy there. As the farmer's wife at Guernoter used to say, "she had earned a good deal with her six francs !"

(Related by Marie Louise Bellec, dressmaker, Port-Blanc.)

XXXVI.—ANOTHER VERSION OF THE SAME STORY

A YOUNG dressmaker in the neighbourhood of Penmarc'h had great devotion to the Dead, (" *L'Anaon* "). One evening, as she was returning home from her work very late, she heard a movement and something like stifled moans coming from out the brambles which bordered the road. She asked, "Who is there ?" No one answered. She concluded

that it was a Soul who wanted help. The next morning she went early to the church, and asked to have a Mass said—"for that Soul in Purgatory who needed but one Mass to be delivered."

The Mass was said.

She was present at this Mass. As she was leaving the church, she met a young man in the churchyard who was dressed all in white.

The young man addressed her, saying,—

"You are a dressmaker by trade?"

"Yes, sir."

"How much do you earn daily in the houses you work in?"

"Sixpence."

"Well, if you would like to gain fifteen pence a day, go to Audierne. You will see a white house at the corner of the market-place. Knock, and ask for the mistress of the house, and say that I sent you."

The girl obeyed. The mistress of the house did not at first receive her kindly.

"I do not know," she said, "who you mean. I have not asked anyone to send me a work-woman."

The girl could not help fixing her eyes on a jet brooch worn by the mistress, in which a miniature was set.

"Pardon me, madame," she said, after a moment's pause; "you have in your brooch the portrait of the person who sent me here."

"It is impossible; that is the portrait of my son, and he has been dead ten years."

"It was your son, then, whom I met. I can swear it by our Lord and His Blessed Mother!"

The old woman then insisted on hearing the whole story. The girl kept nothing from her; she told her of the sounds she had heard in the bushes the night before, of the Mass she had had said that morning, after which she had come across the young man, habited in white, in the churchyard.

The mother understood that she owed to her her son's deliverance from Purgatory. She kept her with her till her death, and left her all her property.

(Related by a girl named Kerhoas, at Quimper.

XXXVII.—THE WHITE INN AND THE RED ROOM *

ONCE upon a time there was an inn at Ponthon called the White Inn, because it had a white front.

The innkeepers were honest, good people, who fulfilled their Easter religious duties, and whose bills might safely be paid without reckoning up.

Travellers frequented the White Inn, and horses knew its stable door so well that they stopped there of themselves.

Autumn had begun to shorten and to sadden the days, when, one evening that Floc'h, the landlord of the White Inn, stood at the door, a traveller, apparently a personage of importance, stopped before it. He was riding a white horse of a breed not known in that part of the country. Raising his hat, he

* This last narrative, "The Story of the White Inn," does not appear in M. Le Braz's book, but is taken from a volume of Breton folk-lore by Mr Emile Souvestre, published about twenty years ago.

said to the innkeeper, "I should like to have some supper and a private room."

Floc'h took his pipe from his mouth and then his hat off his head, and answered, "May God bless you, sir! You can have supper, certainly, but I don't know how we can manage to give you a private room, for we have six muleteers upstairs who are on their way home to Redon, and they have engaged all the six beds of the White Inn."

The traveller exclaimed; "For God's sake, my good man, don't leave me out in the cold! Even the dogs have kennels, and it is hard that a Christian should have no place to sleep in, such weather as this!"

"Sir," replied Floc'h, much distressed, "I can only tell you that the inn is full,—there is only the Red Room!"

"Well then, let me have the Red Room!" said the stranger.

The innkeeper scratched his head and seemed perplexed and troubled. He felt he could not offer the Red Room to the traveller.

"Ever since I have been at the White

Inn," he said at last, "two men only have slept in that room, and the next day the hair of each had turned white in the night!"

The traveller fixed his eyes on the landlord.

"Do the Dead visit your house, then, my good man?"

"They have done so," answered Floc'h, under his breath.

"Then, in the name of God, and of His Virgin Mother, make me a fire in the Red Room, and warm the bed, for I am cold!"

The innkeeper did as he was bidden.

After having supped, the traveller bade goodnight to all at the table, and went upstairs to the Red Room.

The innkeeper and his wife shuddered, and began to say their prayers.

The stranger having entered the chamber in which he was to sleep, glanced all round it.

It was a large room, painted flame-colour, and on its walls were great glistening stains, which fancy might have declared to be painted in fresh blood. In its depths, there was a

large bed, enclosed by thick curtains. Except for the bed, it was empty of furniture.

The wind wailed in the chimney, and outside through the passages, like the cry of sad Souls beseeching prayers.

The traveller knelt down and spoke silently to God.

Then he laid him down without fear, and was soon sound asleep.

But as midnight struck from the clock of the distant church, he heard the curtains being drawn back upon their iron rods, and saw that they were being opened on the right hand side.

The traveller sprang from his bed. His feet struck against something cold,—he drew back, startled.

Before him stood a coffin, with four wax lights at the four corners, a large black pall covered it, dotted with white specks, signifying tears.

The stranger rushed to the other side of the bed, but immediately the coffin crossed over also, and again stood before him.

Five times he strove to get away from it,

and five times the bier placed itself before him, with its wax lights and heavy black pall.

All at once the traveller comprehended that the dead man must have a request to make. He knelt up upon his bed, and having made the sign of the Cross, said: "Who are you, dead man? Speak, a Christian asks!"

A voice came out of the coffin, and said:

"I am a traveller who was murdered by the people who had the house before the present man came. I died without the Sacraments, and I am suffering in Purgatory."

"What askest thou, suffering Soul, for thy relief?"

"I ask that six Masses be said in the church of Nôtre Dame de Folgoat, by a priest in a black and white vestment, and that a pilgrimage be made on my behalf to Notre Dame de Rumengol."

After that, the wax lights went out, the curtains drew together, and all was still.

The stranger passed the night in prayer. On the morrow he told the innkeeper all that had happened, and added this: "My good man, I am Monsieur de Rohan, belonging to

the noblest family in Brittany. I promise to make the pilgrimage to Rumengol, and I will pay for the six Masses. This Soul shall be delivered.

A month later, the blood stains had vanished from the Red Room, and it had become as clean and bright as the other rooms of the inn.

The only sound to be heard in it was that of the swallows in the eaves building their nests, and it contained three little beds surmounted by a crucifix.

The stranger had kept his word.

FINIS

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